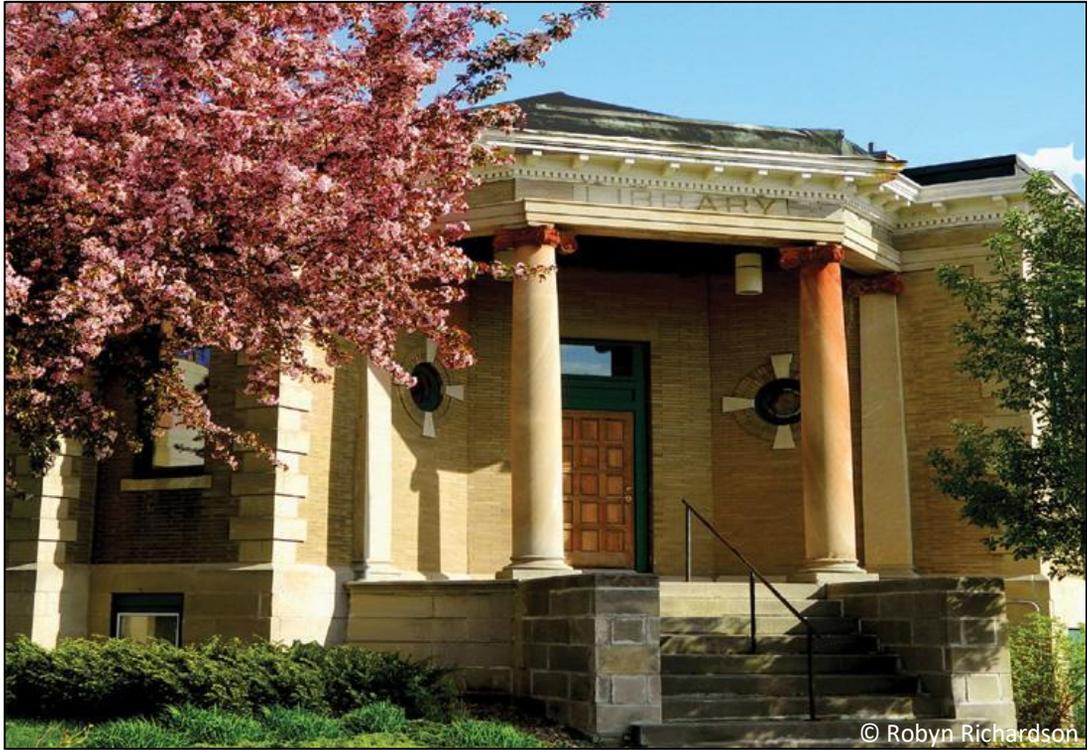


# Carnegie Library

## “Library Square”



**Location:** 201 S. Sibley Avenue, Litchfield, Minnesota

On February 2, 1903, the City of Litchfield received a \$10,000 grant from the wealthy industrialist Andrew Carnegie to build the Litchfield Carnegie Library. As part of the agreement, the community was to provide a site and impose upon themselves a 10% tax to insure a long term commitment for the purchase of books, staff and maintenance of the building.

The library opened its doors to the public on May 12, 1904 and contained 900 books. The first librarian was the daughter of Clark Angell, Mrs. Agnes (Angell) Lamb. She served as the head librarian for 34 years. In 1960, the Library Board hired Mrs. Foster Butterwick as the Children’s Librarian. The basement became the children’s department on October 1<sup>st</sup> of the same year. Worthy to note, children’s services in Litchfield have remained a high priority ever since. According to statistics, children’s per-capita usage in Litchfield is higher than the state average.

The Carnegie Library’s architecture is classical revival with a raised stone basement. The building is faced with brick and trimmed with stone. The main facade consists of a central entrance bay supported by free-standing columns. A stone panel on the frieze is inscribed with the word 'Library'. The low-pitched roof once had an ornate dome (see photos at the end of this article). Problems with the roof and dome appeared in the 1950’s. The City made the repairs for \$540, but by 1961 the roof and dome began leaking again. The City voted to repair the roof and replace the dome. There was a public outcry and a “Save the Dome” campaign prompted a more thorough study of the issue. However, in 1964, the City replaced the dome at a cost of \$2000. Sadly, the removal of the dome altered the historic building making it ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The library served the public until 1978 when it was vacated due to leakage problems. The building was sold by the City in 1980 to Bill and Laura Harper. The Harpers opened the “Library Square Restaurant” in

June of 1982. The beautiful chandelier that still hangs in the lobby was installed by the Harpers at a cost of \$5,000.00. In 1982, \$5,000.00 had the same buying power as \$12,842.13 has in 2017. The Harpers sold the building in 1993 and it became a Chinese restaurant that operated until 1997. In 2011, Carl and Brenda Anderson purchased the building and began major renovations of the interior to provide office space rentals. The building was brought up to code, walls were torn down and piped in beverage lines that still had syrup in them from the restaurants that once operated there were removed.

In 2015, the Andersons hired a renovation company to preserve the historical integrity of the building. Structural renovations, reroofing, tuck pointing, and chemically cleaning the exterior were a major part of the project. Additionally, the capitals that sat on top of the columns in the front of the building were replaced. "Those capitals are original to the library and are actually made out of terracotta, and they're just decorative," Carl said. The Andersons had solid stone capitals made to replace them. The horizontal beams above the entrance were also replaced.

In the future, the Andersons hope to renovate the original wood floors in the lobby and reconstruct a concrete slab on the front steps to be more historically accurate and place a time capsule in it.

### **Carnegie Library Memories:**

#### ***Brenda Anderson, current owner:***

*"I remember sitting on the red carpet as a preschooler, enjoying milk and cookies during story time at the Carnegie Library." (October 2015)*

#### ***Kathy Laidlow:***

*"Loved the library. Still love reading today, one of my favorite past times. It all started there." (September 20, 2015)*

#### ***Janice Thomas:***

*"After we were married in 1961, we lived in an upstairs apartment next door in the McClure home. Our windows overlooked the library. I'm so sorry the dome had to be removed. This is a beautiful building." (September 20, 2015)*

#### ***Heather Cordes Weseman:***

*"I remember going to the restaurant as a little girl and loving their Reuben sandwiches! I was very impressed by the huge chandelier." (September 20, 2015)*

#### ***Roberta Hallquist:***

*"I'll never forget the delightful children's library with Mrs. Welch the librarian. What a wonderful lady! There was a grandfather clock, too, and it was so much fun checking out stacks of colorful, creative books. I loved the Cherry Ames, RN and Sue Barton, RN series in particular...Cherry was always in a scrape with some villain, but a handsome young intern would come to her rescue every time...and the Director of Nurses always said, That will do, Miss Ames...It was fun reading out in our backyard in the summertime! The adult library was also fascinating, and I recall reading books that taught me how to make sherbet, and also about the Rule of Fourteen in fashion, which Joyce LaMont also included in her multifaceted cookbook published more recently. Great after school memories akin to the town library in The Music Man, but considerably more tame!" (September 20, 2015)*

#### ***Patti Hennan:***

*"We lived right across the street from the library..Aw, the memories." (September 19, 2015)*

***Sue Moen:***

"I have many great memories of the summer reading program for kids downstairs, and the little book stickers that we put on the picture of the bookshelf.....I began my avid love of reading here!"  
(September 19, 2015)

***Steven Paul:***

"I remember the summer between my kindergarten year and first grade I got my first library card. When you checked out your first book you received a sheet with the American flag on it. You took your book home, colored the blue field and stripes. When you were done reading your book and brought it back with your sheet they would ask you a question about the book, making sure you read it and then would place a star on the field of blue for you. At that time though there were only 48 states." (September 19, 2015)

***Dee Christenson Reader:***

" I would stop at the library to pick up books to read on the way from school. Enjoyed reading the history of the library - I left Litchfield before the restaurant was there but ate there a few times when we come home to visit Mom and Dad." (September 19, 2015)

***Judy Markgraf:***

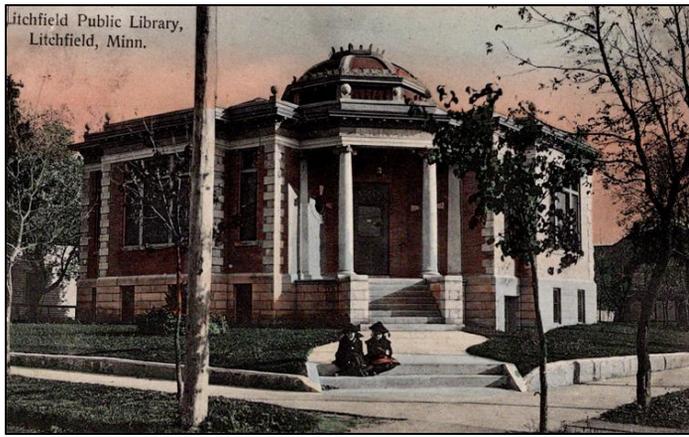
"I remember a few things about that beautiful library and later restaurant. I was born in Litchfield and when I was 5 my family moved to Montana where we lived until I was a senior in high school. We moved back to this area and shortly after, my grandfather died. So, I stayed with my grandmother for a time. One of the things that we did was to drive around to the local cemeteries to find the stones of my Schultz ancestors. My grandfather had told me that his grandfather was the "first white settler to come into Meeker County and stayed until he died." My grandmother showed me where my gr gr grandparents were buried in Ripley and that was the start of my love of genealogy. So, I went to the library and told the librarian what my grandfather had told me about his grandfather. The librarian pointed me to the early historical Meeker County history books, and sure enough! I found stories about my gr gr grandfather. That further excited me about my family tree so I began searching more to find out more about my ancestors. Then a few years later I got married and started having children. I brought our daughter to the children's library for story hour once a week, and she loved it. While she was at story hour, my younger son and I would go out to eat breakfast or just have coffee. When he was old enough for story hour, however, he refused to stay and later he said he wanted to go out and eat instead. ha then forward many years and my husband and I would take our seven children out to eat after church every Sunday and most of the time we went to the restaurant because my husband loved the pancakes they made there. Those were the last time we went to the library, so it has been many years since I have been in there. We, too, loved the chandelier and the charm of the restaurant...wasn't it called 'The Library?'" I remember they had a library theme to the decor. I'm glad they are renovating it as well. Thanks, Andersons, for preserving the past memories. " (Sept. 19, 2015)

***Virgil Anders:***

"The Carnegie Library was one my favorite places as a farm kid from about the fifth grade on. When my folks went to town I would get dropped off there to swap books, read periodicals and just enjoy the comfortable environment. The interior was absolutely beautiful with beautiful furnishings. Later in HS and college I still went there to concentrate. Fondest memory is a fantastic volume of Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea! Was heart broken when it was inactivated." (July 2017)

***Litchfield Librarian, Kathy Matson:***

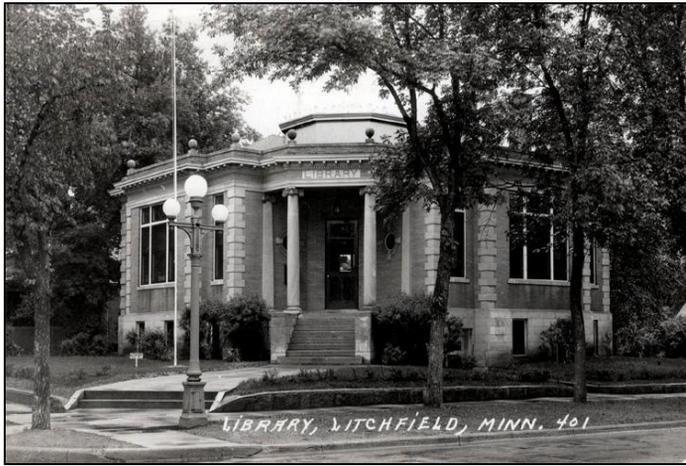
*"The library was close to the train tracks and as the train went past you could hear the plaster behind the built-in bookshelves crumbling. (November, 2010)*



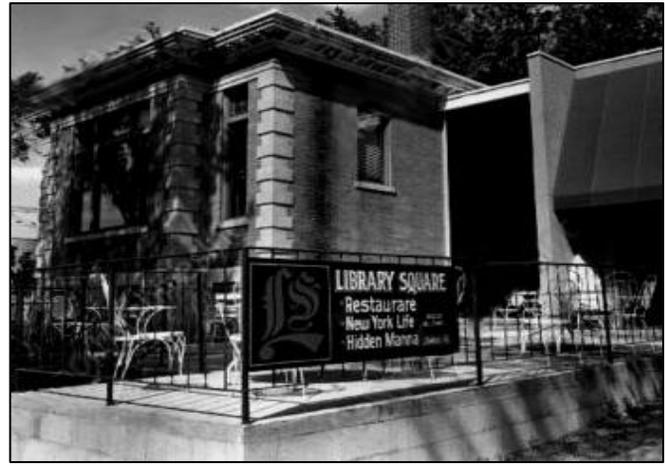
1908



1911



1947



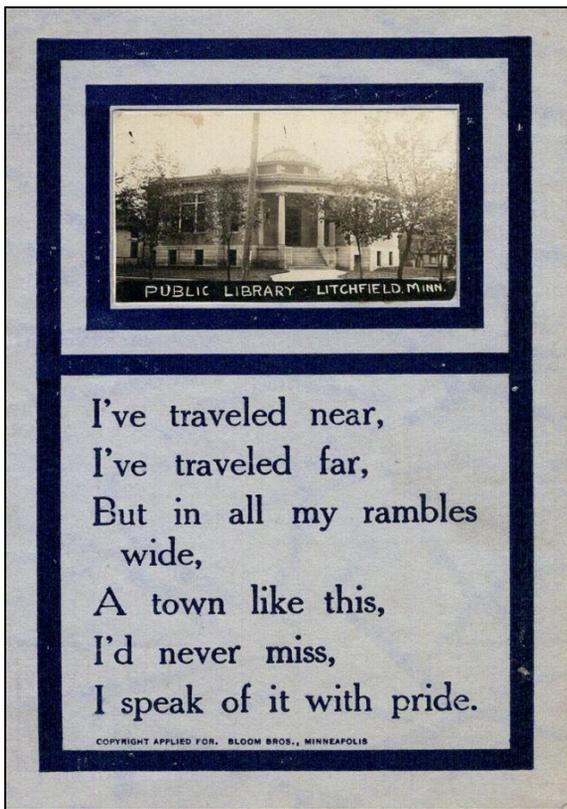
1980's



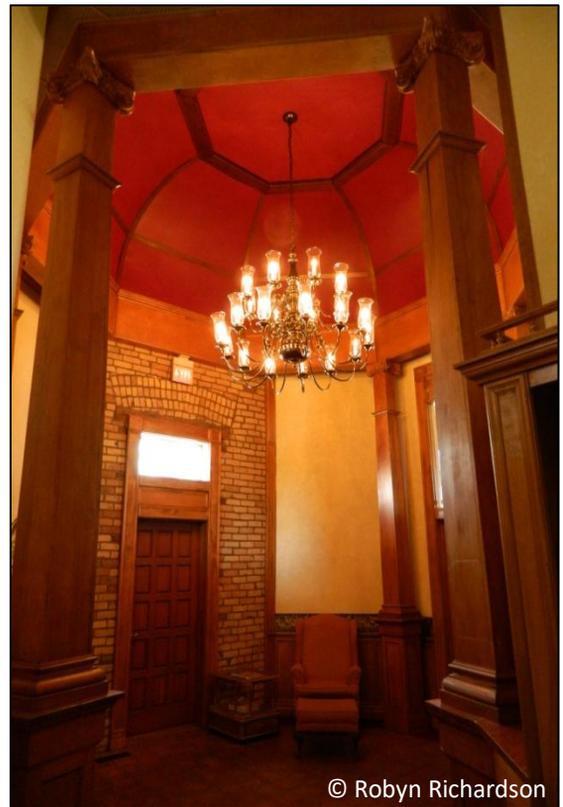
Inside Library Square Restaurant, 1980's



Inside Library Square Restaurant, 1980's



1912



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2013

*Postcard photos courtesy of Robyn Richardson*

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