

# Yakima Regional Library Notes 60 Years Of Service

By WILLIAM GOUGH

Untold thousands of persons in the Yakima Valley were to be affected for the better by a letter that originated from the New York desk of philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in December of 1903.

The letter discussed money, but what has resulted is learning imparted from literature, from a child's book of nursery rhymes to the millions of volumes that improve men's minds.

Addressed to the Rev. H. M. Bartlett, president of the North Yakima Public Library Association, the letter reads:

"If the city agree by resolution of councils to maintain a free public library at cost of not less than one thousand dollars a year and provide a suitable site for the building, Mr. Carnegie will be pleased to furnish ten thousand dollars to erect a free public library building for North Yakima."

Mr. Carnegie did indeed donate money for a public library here. Begun in 1906 and dedi-

cated in April 1907, the building served well and long at the corner of 3rd and A streets. The building stood until mid-1957.

By then, forces of library expansion and modernization were at work. No sooner had the wreckage of the old building been cleared away than began to be erected the building that stands on the same corner today.

It is from the Yakima Valley Regional Library that 60 years of library service at the same location will be commemorated this week, highlighted by two public events.

In the library's main reading room, at 2 p.m., Wednesday, speakers in a program will help to celebrate the six decades of library service. Yakima Mayor Jack Larson will bring greetings from the city; June Thurston, regional librarian, will relate some of the library's history; and Mrs. Bruce Coombs, recently elected president of the American Library Trustees Association,

will discuss the importance of libraries in today's society.

The second event — at which Spokane author, story-teller and musician Simeon Oliver will speak — will take place in the library auditorium Friday at 8 p.m.

Refreshments will be served at each event.

The programs will be held 60 years to the month that the Carnegie building was dedicated. In attendance will be men and women associated with the development of the library, which now has 16 branches.

Completion of the Carnegie library, in its time a handsome and commodious edifice, was the culmination of 18 years of work by dedicated men and women. Mrs. Thurston said. They were determined, she said, that their city should be second to none in the state in offering cultural advantages to residents.

The first, faint stirrings toward library service here began in 1889. The Young Women's Christian Temperance

Union opened in that year a public reading room on First Street, just south of a Mrs. Mays' store. However, the women were unable to rally sufficient support, even though they gave a "lawn social" to raise funds.

The women were forced to abandon the project, but a different group of women made a second start when they met March 26, 1891, at the Yakima Hotel, to organize a "circulating library association."

Established that night was the North Yakima Library Association. It was supported by private subscriptions, gifts, box socials and balls and formed the real basis of the Yakima Public Library. Mrs. Thurston said. The city assumed operation of the public library in 1904.

Mrs. Thurston gives much credit for the library's development to the Rev. Mr. Bartlett, the man who was largely responsible for securing the Carnegie grant that made the first building possible.



**GONE ARE THE DAYS** — Yakima's first public library is gone. Only the library service and the parking meters remain at this downtown corner. Built in 1906 and opened a year later, the library was made possible by a \$10,000

grant by Andrew Carnegie. The building was razed in 1957 and the present Yakima Valley Regional Library constructed on the same site. Sixty years of library service will be commemorated this week.