

Summit Historical Minute

Summit Free Public Library

Presentation at the February 17, 2016 Common Council Meeting

Presented by Tim Childers, Summit High School Senior

In the next minute I intend to shed light on one of our community's greatest treasures – the Summit Free Public Library.

The idea of a local library originated in 1873 when several Summit citizens created the Summit Library Association under a new state law that promoted public learning.

By 1891 the Association constructed its first building on the plot of land shaped by the intersection of Tulip Street and New England Avenue, which is now known as the Summit Playhouse.

Soon enough the Library broadened its accessibility and became free to all Summit citizens. By the turn of the century the Library was funded by City taxes and employed professionally-trained librarians.

However, in order to meet an increasing demand in inventory, members of the City Council eventually turned to public donations and in 1917 Andrew Carnegie, who was a dear friend of Summit resident, William Lyall, donated \$20,000 toward the construction of a new library on the corner of Morris Avenue and Maple Street, which would be referred to as "Carnegie Hall."

However, almost 30 years later, in 1951, the committee recognized an increasingly overcrowded building and limited services and in 1967 a \$700,000 bond issue financed the construction of a new and improved building on the same lot, replacing "Carnegie Hall."

Recently, in 1999, a 4.5 million-dollar project was set to renovate and expand the library transforming it into the current architectural design.

The Mission Statement provided by the library clearly reads "The library serves the total community as the center for intellectual, literary and cultural curiosity, as well as information services, programs and activities."

It is clear that even after nearly 130 years of service, the Summit Free Public Library still fulfills its purpose as a community stronghold.

Thank you.