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## Ginnie Graham: Collinsville Library celebrates centennial of its opening as a Carnegie-grant institution

By Ginnie Graham News Columnist Jul 17, 2017 Updated 59 min ago  0





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### Collinsville Library centennial celebration

When: 2-5 p.m. Tuesday

Where: Collinsville Library, 1223 W. Main St.

What: Featured will be storytime, magic show with Chris Capstone, cupcakes and prizes. A time capsule will be filled with photos and items representing life in Collinsville today. The contents will not be seen again until 2067, at the library's 150th birthday celebration.

For more information, call 918-549-7528 or go to [tulsalibrary.org](http://tulsalibrary.org)



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COLLINSVILLE — The Comedy of Errors Club served as the keeper of books for Collinsville residents in the early 20th century until the group tapped into the grants for libraries being given out by steel magnate and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.

It was 100 years ago that the Carnegie Collinsville Library opened.

Between 1899 and 1916, Oklahoma received \$464,500 through 24

Carnegie library grants. Of those, nine are still in use as a library – in Collinsville, Elk City, El Reno, Frederick, Hobart, Perry, Sapulpa, Tahlequah and Wagoner, according to the [Oklahoma Historical Society](#).

Eight other libraries remain standing but are in use as museums or offices. They are in Ardmore, Bartlesville, Cordell, Guthrie, Lawton, Muskogee, Shawnee and Woodward. Razed Carnegie libraries in the state were in Chickasha, Enid, McAlester, Miami, Oklahoma City, Ponca City and Tulsa.

In Collinsville, several events will be held at the library, at 1223 W. Main St., starting at 2 p.m. Tuesday, to mark the anniversary.

**Labor of love:** The Comedy of Errors social club was formed by women in 1903 to obtain a library for the budding Collinsville community, which the 1900 census recorded as having 376 people.

The organization acquired its first books from a Methodist church and kept them in the home of the group's founder, Mrs. J.A. Tyner. Then the books moved around a bit until 1911, when a second-floor room in the new City Hall was made available. The library was funded through teas and talent shows.

The acquisition of new book titles was news big enough to be reported in the local newspaper.

By 1910, the city had grown to 1,324 residents, and the pace of population growth wasn't slowing down. It would more than double during the next decade, recording 3,801 people in 1920.

It was clear that the City Hall reading room was not an adequate space for a library. This time period coincided with Carnegie's philanthropic giving that created 2,409 libraries all over the world using \$41 million in grants from the Carnegie Corp.

A condition of each grant was for the community to pledge to match 10 percent of the grant from tax money for maintenance costs, and that could not come from an endowment or gift. It was a way to show that the community was invested in the ongoing success of the library.

So the social club got busy. The members sought to raise matching funds through bake sales, theater performances and book drives.

A scrapbook at the Collinsville library, created by library associate Robin Bushyhead, holds a trove of details of the library's genesis, including club minutes, attendance, receipts and the city's resolution to support the library.

"They did all the things all little towns do," said Rhonda Weldon, Collinsville Library branch manager. "It really showed how much the residents valued literature and how they were especially concerned about public education."

The club secured a \$7,500 Carnegie grant in 1915. Architect Walter R. Faught from Wichita, Kansas, designed the red brick building with a full basement, an assembly room that could seat 2,000, and restrooms. The first librarian was Iva Nicodemus.

On opening day in 1917, the local newspaper reported that a host of speakers gave book readings, extolled the virtues of public libraries and predicted the need for bigger facilities in the future. The library's bank balance in June that year was \$2,612.45.

*"The opening and public reception at the new Carnegie library last night was one of the events that will long be remembered by the people of Collinsville. The large number of citizens who were out to hear the exercises literally packed the building; there was hardly standing room for them."*

**Making it their own:** In 1962, a countywide vote consolidated area libraries into the Tulsa City-County Library system. At the

time, those were the libraries in Tulsa, Collinsville, Broken Arrow, Skiatook and Sand Springs. The Carnegie Collinsville Library turned into the Collinsville Library branch of the Tulsa City-County Library.



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The move secured a county tax base and resources from the larger metropolitan library system.

“It reflects the foresight of the people who built this in the community,” Weldon said. “It’s also about those in 1962 in the Tulsa countywide vote, which has made a world of difference financially.

“For a little town like this to have this type of collection for its library — we couldn’t do it without Tulsa County. And that’s a

credit to the foresight and planning of those people who lived here.”

In 2000, the Collinsville Library expanded from 3,260 square feet to 7,860 square feet, with added features such as a children’s corner, an elevator, enhanced technology and a stained-glass window. The exterior and roof have stayed within the original architectural concept.

“It’s a nice open floor plan with a lot of light,” Weldon said. “It’s a small place, but people manage to find little nooks and make it their own.”

The centennial celebration marks a successful past but also looks to the future.

Last month, 5,859 people visited the Collinsville Library, which averages between 3,000 and 4,000 monthly visitors. That is in addition to the patrons who access online resources from databases to electronic books.

It continues to serve as a community hub with a meeting room and youth activities. Last month, seven adult volunteers donated 54 hours and 17 teen volunteers gave 413 hours to the summer reading program.

“Now more than ever, people are coming to us for help using digital technology, and things change so quickly,” Weldon said. “We are all things to all people, and that is our challenge. ...

“People think of a library as a quiet, boring place. It’s actually exciting. It’s never boring here.”

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News Columnist Ginnie Graham

