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It is doubtful if the thousands who now enjoy the facilities of the Monrovia Public Library, recognized as among the finest in the state, realize how humble was the start of a library here. Or the countless hours of dedicated work that went into making a dream come true.

It was in 1891 that a group of women organized the Saturday Afternoon Club, later to become the Woman's Club of Monrovia and began working toward the establishment of a public library in their city. They initiated the movement that was to lead to later securing funds from the Carnegie Library Foundation.

All members of that original group have passed away, and even the Woman's Club has ceased to exist here.

First step of the club women was to entertain at a tea with the guests being asked to bring books. Approximately 50 volumes were donated and these became the nucleus of the present-day library with its thousands of volumes.

In 1894 the city trustees appointed the first library board. Under the city ordinance then in effect only men could serve on the board, which was circumvented by the election of men, who immediately resigned and appointed women to fill the vacancies.

In 1895 the library was officially opened in a room in the Granite Bank Building, later to become the city hall, at the corner of Myrtle and Palm avenues.

The rental was \$2.50 a month, and a librarian was hired at a dollar a day.

The Library Board, in November 1902 examined the possibility of obtaining funds from Andrew Carnegie who was contributing toward the establishment of libraries in all parts of the United States. It wasn't until 1905 that the good news came that Carnegie would donate \$10,000 for a library in Monrovia, providing the city met with certain conditions. City trustees immediately accepted the offer and the attendant conditions, set October for a necessary special bond election, which would provide, among other things, a library site. Credit is given to the campaigning by members of the Saturday Afternoon Club, for the passage of the bond issue. It provided \$8,000 for the purchase of the Granite Building to be used as a city hall, and \$18,000 for purchasing the remainder of the entire block, bounded by Myrtle, Palm, Primrose and Lime avenues. This was to be the beginning of the present beautiful Library Park.

The long-awaited library building, with its cover of ivy, was to become a cherished landmark. Its eventual razing was decried by hundreds of oldtimers. It was ready for occupancy on Jan. 27, 1908, with Evelyn Hill as chief librarian. Miss Hill also trained a small class in library operation, one of its members, Anne Crews becoming chief librarian in 1917. She served until her death in 1952 and was greatly loved by the entire community. Lester J. Bergslien was named as her successor.

Just as Monrovia grew, population wise, so did the patronage of the library. Late in the 1940s it became apparent that a larger library and a new city hall were needed. But the voters, in April 1950, turned down a bond issue that would have assured the new facilities.

It was the late Frederick P. Alvord who made possible the solution of the library needs when he bequeathed \$50,000 toward a new building, this serving as a nucleus of the library building fund. With additional monies earmarked by the city for this purpose, plus a sum that had been accumulated by the Library Board, it was possible to begin construction of a new library, located just to the east of the old building, by the summer of 1956. It was dedicated in January 1957.

The move to the new, from the old building, which was then demolished marked the end of an era.



The new building was designed by Architects Eugene W. Fickes Jr. and J.D. Harnish, and was constructed by Saffell and McAdam, with the formal dedication taking place on Sunday, Jan. 6, 1957.

The new library has thousands of volumes of fiction, non-fiction and reference books, scores of magazines, a record department, copying machine and an art section.

It also has a room for exhibits, lectures, board meetings and other special events, known, in honor of the library's benefactor, as the Alvord Room.

Succeeding Bergslien when he resigned to become librarian for the city of Downey, was Katherine Ainsworth, widow of the late Ed