

# *Preserving the Past*

## THE HIBBING HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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*Special Edition*

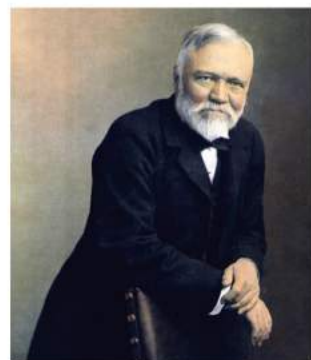
### *North Hibbing Carnegie Library*

The North Hibbing Carnegie Library grant of \$25,000 was awarded on April 23, 1906. The original library (at right) was completed and opened to the public in 1908. The library contained hundreds of volumes, a special children's room, and circulated 4,000 books to a population of 8,000 people during its first year of operation.



By 1916, the growing population of Hibbing called for a major renovation of the building. Money raised by the town tripled the library's size, leaving only two of the original building's walls. The original façade of red brick and red sandstone trim was replaced by pink sandstone. (Shown at left)

Andrew Carnegie was born in Scotland in 1835, and made his fortune as a steel tycoon by forming the Carnegie Steel Company in the 1870's. He later merged his company to form the United States Steel Corporation in the early 1900's. Throughout his lifetime he donated much of his fortune to the creation of libraries through grants. 2,509 Carnegie libraries were built between 1883 and 1929, with 66 in Minnesota alone. Grants in this state totaled \$999,375, making Minnesota the 8th largest recipient of Carnegie funds in the United States.





## North Hibbing Carnegie Library Murals

The 8 murals were painted by Clarence C. Rosenkranz, a Duluth artist. He was hired by the village of Hibbing in 1916 for the interior decoration of the newly expanded and remodeled library. He first painted two murals, Dawn and Twilight, directly onto the canvas ceiling of the library, filling the dome-shaped space near the skylight. Impressed with these works, the city again commissioned Rosenkranz, and in 1917, he painted 6 more murals at his Duluth studio entitled Knowledge, Husbandry, Wisdom, The Arts, Industry, Invention. He titled the series, "The Genius of Minnesota," and sought to tell the story of the industry and resources that made up the state.



### Layout in the Library

In total, there were 8 murals. The murals measure 10 to 12 feet wide, and 6 feet high, and feature figures wearing Romanesque apparel. All featuring toga- and robe-clad figures gathered around pillars and symbolic characteristics. The center panel, which was originally above the circulation desk, symbolizes Wisdom. This mural, which is said to be the key to the other panels, reads "Wisdom receives and preserves to the use of man, knowledge brought to her by art and industry." It shows law and the student on one side, and the family guarded by the State on the other. The panel to the right of center represents Invention (also called Drama), which symbolized the state's natural resources in wood working, iron, construction arts and water transportation. Other figures in the mural represented Guttenburg, inventor of the printing press; mathematics, physics, electricity, medicine, and botany, which is symbolized by the state flower, the lady slipper. The panel to the left of center is titled Arts, representing sculpting, painting, singing, music, and theater. On the far right of the library was Husbandry (also called Harvest or Agriculture), which showed figures holding the state's fruits and vegetables, along with an equine figure. On the far left of the library was Industry - now missing.



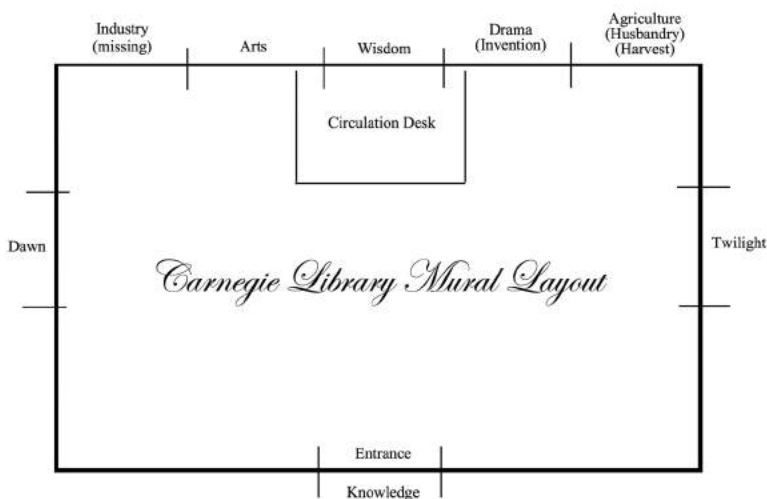
Wisdom



Invention (Drama)



Arts







Dawn and Twilight are the two "domed" murals shown below. They represent man being brought out of darkness into the light through knowledge gained from reading. They were painted on the East and West walls respectively so that the morning sun would light up the Dawn panel, and the evening sun would shine on Twilight. The panel over the entrance is called Knowledge, which depicted the attributes of the State of Minnesota - Power, Justice, Prosperity, and Religion. In the center is the state seal with the United States and the Minnesota flags flowing behind it.



Husbandry



Dawn



Knowledge



Twilight



Industry

### *Removal from the Library*

These murals dominated the walls of the library for over three decades — even as the city was forced to move south and build a new library, the present one. On Jan. 19, 1954, the Carnegie closed its doors for the last time. It was slated to be torn down in 1957, as it was deemed too difficult to move, and the brand new library had been constructed in South Hibbing. When the building was sold to the Oliver Iron Mining Company, the First Settlers Association (now Hibbing Historical Society) lead the effort to remove and save the murals. They were given permission from the company to remove them, but were only given two days. They hired a local painter to help steam the murals off the walls. On the third day, the members had not finished, but fortune was on their side as a problem with the demolition equipment gave them an extra day. With time running out, the staff cut the murals from their frames and brought them to the First Settlers Museum in City Hall.





### *Restoration*

The murals were in poor condition after their removal, and while the First Settlers Association wanted to restore them, they realized it was much too difficult for them to accomplish, and much too expensive. They rolled the murals up and stored them at city hall until funds could be procured. In 1975, Pat Mestek became the director of the Hibbing Historical Society, and once again started the project. Because the murals had been rolled up for so long with no care, it would cost \$12,000 to relax the canvases, remove the old glue, retouch some of the paint, and flatten them safely. \$6,000 was granted by the Minnesota Historical Society in 1978, if a matching amount could be raised within 2 years. The economy of the range was very poor during this time and Mestek had to fight for an extension of an additional two years. Over the next 2 years, 117 local people and businesses contributed the matching funds. Once the money was in place, the murals were taken to the Minneapolis Institute of Art for restoration. However, only 7 of the 8 murals were restored. One of the murals, a panel named Industry, has been missing since the murals were unrolled in 1975 (and possibly longer).



The newly-restored murals were installed at the Hibbing Public Library, Hibbing High School library, and the U.S. Bank (originally First Bank of Hibbing). The Hibbing Public Library now displays Twilight, Dawn, and Knowledge. The Hibbing High School Library has Wisdom and Husbandry. U.S. Bank displays The Arts and Invention.

After the moving of the town, and completion of a new library in south Hibbing, the Carnegie Library was sold to the Oliver Iron Mining Company and demolished in 1957.

How the panels seem to have acquired names differing from their initial identities and — most importantly — what happened to the eighth panel does pose a mystery.

If you have any additional information, feel free to share your knowledge with the historical society. In any case, take time to revisit the seven murals and reconnect with part of the history of our community.



Join us for these upcoming events !

**Tuesday, August 9th: Celebrate Hibbing's Birthday Party at 6:00 pm on the lawn of City Hall.** Inductees to the Hall of Service and Achievement will include Sam Perrella along with Bill and Norma Schleppegrell. The City Band will perform. Cake and punch will be served. In the event of inclement weather, this event will be held at the Memorial Building.

**Saturday, October 22nd: Annual Fall Meeting and Luncheon** featuring the history of the Hibbing Fire Department.

**Friday, December 9th: Second Annual Christmas Open House.**

### Annual Fundraiser

The Hibbing Historical Society held its annual fundraiser on Saturday, May 7th, at the Androy. Entitled "EXTRA! EXTRA! Read All About It!", the program and exhibits focused on the history of Hibbing's newspapers. Approximately 75 members and guests are in attendance, including current Hibbing Tribune journalists Tony Potter, Crystal Dey and Jack Lynch. Long-time former editor, Al Zdon, and his wife also attended and renewed old friendships. Jack Lynch was honored and presented with a plaque for his service as newspaperman and historian.

Thanks to generous donations from members and local businesses, the evening's silent auction was a great success!

