

Fort Valley State University

by Carole R. Taylor

Libraries in historically black colleges and universities can not be completely understood without some background on the significance of philanthropic support. Whether public or private, rural or urban, the first

libraries and the buildings were tied to philanthropic organizations such as the Slater Fund, Rosenwald Foundation, American Church Institute, General Education Board and the Carnegie Corporation.

The first known library at Fort Valley High and Industrial School (now Fort Valley State University) was in one room of Chapel Hall. The three story brick building, constructed in January 1905, contained the Chapel, classrooms, offices and the boys dormitory rooms. By 1912, the library housed over 2,000 volumes purchased and donated by various philanthropic organizations.

By 1924, funds were obtained from the Carnegie Foundation to erect a new building, and in 1925, Carnegie Hall was completed

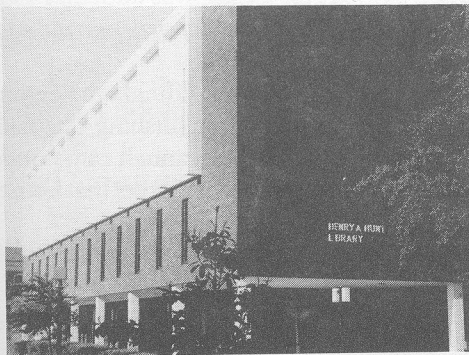


with the use of student labor. Named after its benefactor, Andrew Carnegie, Fort Valley State became the only black state institution in Middle Georgia to have a Carnegie building. The library moved from a one room environment in Chapel Hall to the entire second floor of Carnegie Hall. The Fort Valley High and Industrial School 1928 Bulletin reported that Carnegie Hall was one of the best buildings of its kind in the state to accommodate a multi purpose function. On the first floor were the offices of the Registrar, the Dean, the Business Manager, and the Principal and later the college President and the Extension Departments. Documentation shows that the library contained 6,000 volumes to support the mission and curricula. There was ample space for tables was conveniently arranged for reading and studying to seat approximately eighty eight users. By 1938, the popularity of the library had grown to the extent that the newsletter, *The Fort Valley Message*, included a solicitation for fifty chairs to accommodate readers. Monthly salary and board for a librarian ranged between \$55.00 - 75.00 in the 1930s.



Plans for a new library began prior to 1944 to meet the instructional, research and public service requirements for the next twenty-five years at the College.

The projections were based on an enrollment of 600, a book capacity of 50,000 volumes and seating for 250 users. The third library was a separate building erected in 1951 and dedicated in April, 1952 at the cost of slightly more than \$200,000. It was named in honor of Henry Alexander Hunt, second principal of the Fort Valley Industrial School. Since occupancy, during the summers of 1957-1959, the Hunt Library reached its capacity. The Hunt Library became too overcrowded to adequately serve the needs of the institution. One of the problems was the high temperature within the structure which prohibited consistent attendance, particularly during the summer months. To address the conditions of heat, humidity and lack of space, in 1962 the Board of Regents



approved a \$250,000 grant for the construction of an annex and a face lift for the building. The new library increased space for public services, stacks, audiovisual aids and seminars rooms, and included a gallery for exhibitions.

In 1974, the Board of Regents approved funds to erect another library. The Henry Alexander Memorial Library Learning Resources Center was completed in 1975 and became one of the most attractive buildings on campus. The 72,000 square foot, three story structure has a seating capacity of 625 and space for 250,000 volumes. The facility has a number of features supportive of the educational mission of the institution. Offerings include an after hour study room, a CD-ROM network, an automated management collection



system by Sirsi, the statewide library system GALILEO, independent and group study rooms, interlibrary loan service and other programs for the intellectual achievement and growth of faculty and students. After twenty-two years, the building is still serviceable with some modifications to the design for meeting the virtual library qualifications for the 21st century.

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