

## The Carnegie Library of Atlanta

*Its Early History and Present Proud Position*

By JAMES R. NUTTING

WHILE the Carnegie Library of Atlanta is preparing to celebrate its first twenty-five years of service as a great public institution, one must go back to the years immediately following the Civil War to find its real beginning. In 1867 a few earnest young men, headed by Darwin G. Jones, who is still an honored resident of this city, met and organized the Young Men's Library Association. From the first the library enlisted the interest of the progressive young men of the city, and a position on the library board gradually came to be considered the hallmark of a young man's prominence and standing in the community. To call the roll of the association's officers and directors during the seventies and eighties is to give a list of practically all of Atlanta's well known young men of that period. The names of Harry Jackson, Henry Grady, Hoke Smith, W. T. Newman, W. A. Hemphill, John Keely, Marshall J. Clarke, Aaron Haas, Henry Hillyer, Z. D. Harrison, Louis Gholstein, Julius L. Brown, B. H. Hill, Jr., Charles E. Harman, S. M. Inman, J. W. English, are selected at random from the early lists. Some of these men are still living, and still active in promoting the welfare of the community in which they have lived so long and so honorably.

The first location of the library was on Alabama street on the second floor

of the building now occupied by the Heinz gun store, between the Connally building and the Title Trust building. After a short stay at this location much larger quarters were secured on the second floor of the building still standing at northwest corner of Broad street and the viaduct. The library remained at this location a number of years and became firmly established as a necessary and most valuable part of the educational equipment of the city. Our public school system was established during this period, and from the first the library was largely used by the school children in connection with their school work. This intimate relationship has been extended and strengthened with the years, and the library has become more and more an essential adjunct to our public school system.

From the Broad street location the library moved in 1874 to still more commodious quarters in the building on the southeast corner of Marietta and Forsyth streets, now known as the Ivan Allen-Marshall building, and remained at this location until the erection in 1881 of its own building on the south side of Decatur street between Pryor street and Central avenue.

All of the above buildings are still standing in practically their original shape.

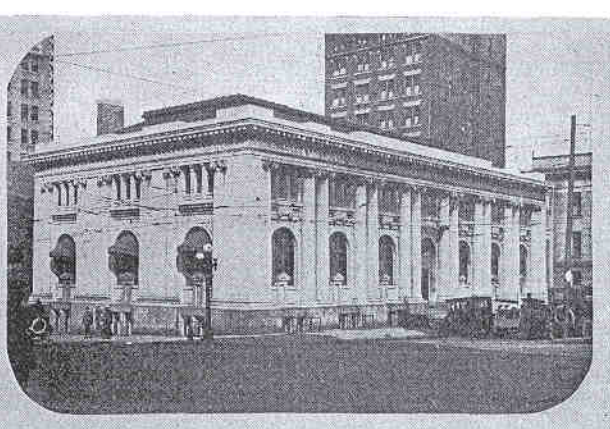
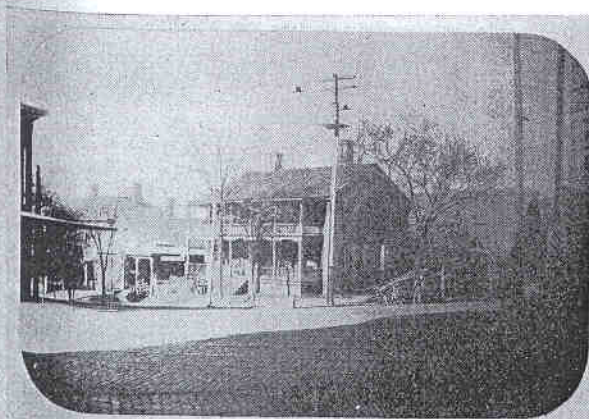
In 1892 the old Markham home was

purchased, the present location of the great office building known as 101 Marietta street, and in 1893, the library was transferred to this new location. In the same year, in May, 1893, the Decatur street property was sold for something over \$70,000—and after covering the payments on the Marietta street property, and also an old indebtedness on the Decatur street property, a considerable balance still remained to be loaned out at interest for the support of the library.

In 1899 the Young Men's Library was merged into the Carnegie Library of Atlanta, and all of the property of the old association was given to the city, thus making possible the immediate establishment of a great public library fully equipped and ready for service.

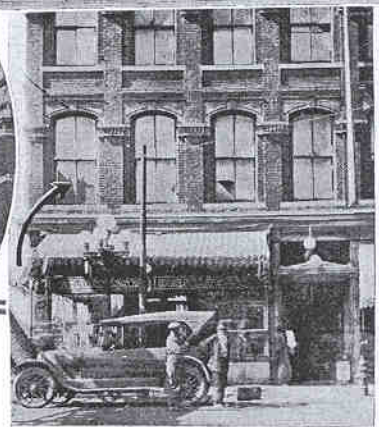
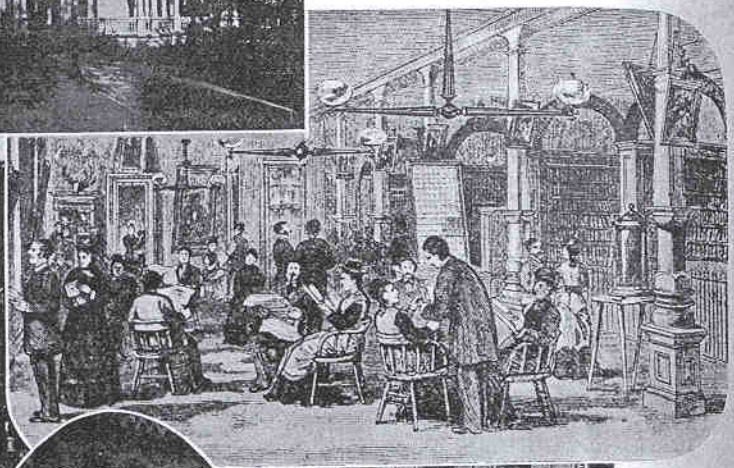
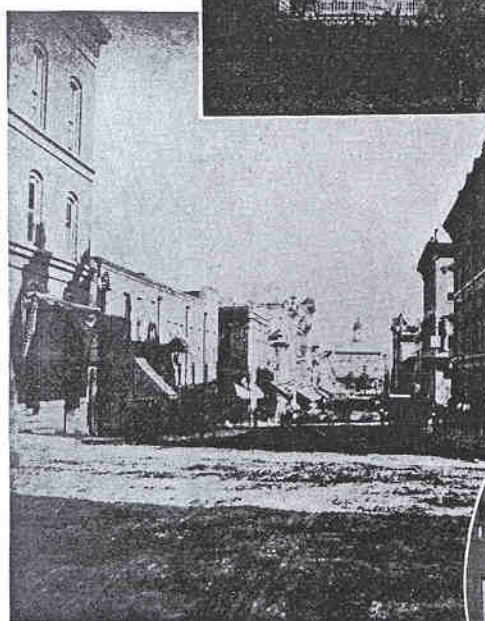
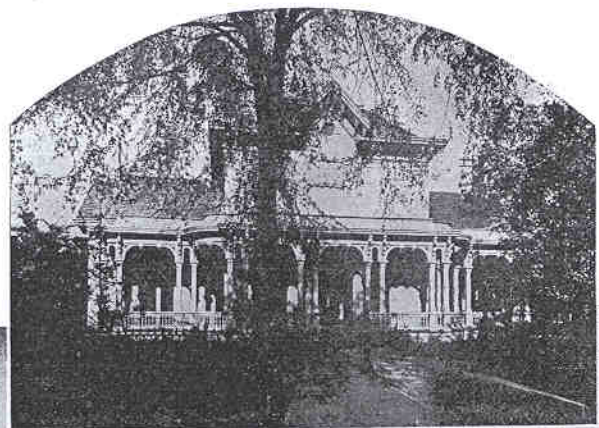
For many years after the establishment of the old library, it was necessary to supplement the meager income from membership dues with fairs, bazaars, lectures, spelling bees, and other forms of public entertainment. At one of the spelling bees, probably the largest ever given in Atlanta, at the old opera house on Marietta street, Governor Northen gave out the words and Judge Logan E. Bleckley delivered the prizes.

Another notable entertainment was the presentation of the "Village School", and it is a matter of some historical interest that Joe Johnson, now a leading figure in New York



At the left is a photograph of the Old Davis Home, corner Carnegie Way and Forsyth Street. At the right is the present Library Building which has displaced the Davis Home.

# THE CITY BUILDER



Top—Last Home of the Young Men's Library, the Old Markham Residence, Marietta and Cone Streets; Left, center—First Home of Young Men's Library, Alabama Street; A Drawing Published in Harper's Weekly in 1879 of the Reading Room of the Young Men's Library, then Located on Corner Marietta and Forsyth Streets; In the Oval is Shown the Home of the Library from 1881 to 1893, on Decatur Street; The Arrow Points to the Location of the Library from 1869 to 1874, Broad Street.

City politics, gained his really first local renown by his rendition of "Catiline's Defiance" at this last-named entertainment.

One of the library's most successful affairs was an excursion to Tallulah Falls, the main feature of which was the walking of a tight rope by a daring performer, the rope being stretched across the Grand Chasm, hundreds of feet above the raging waters below.

But the finer things were not neglected in connection with the schemes for raising money. A very successful art loan exhibit was held when the library was on Decatur street, a sur-

prisingly large number of oil paintings and other works of art being on exhibition, really one of the largest collections in the history of the city.

Well known lecturers were brought to Atlanta under the auspices of the library, the most notable being Henry M. Stanley, at that time in the full flush of his well earned fame.

From the first the library was open to the general public without charge, membership dues being required only from those who desired to take books from the library, and it is a remarkable fact and a splendid tribute to the intelligent and unselfish work of the officers and directors that the library was successfully conducted

for more than thirty years without municipal support of any kind.

In 1899 through the initiative of Mr. Walter M. Kelley, who represented the Carnegie interests in Atlanta, and who at that time was a member of the library board, a donation of \$100,000 was secured from Mr. Andrew Carnegie, for the establishment of a public library in Atlanta under municipal control. The library board through a committee appointed for the purpose, presented the matter to the city authorities, the offer of Mr. Carnegie was accepted, and the Carnegie Library of Atlanta became a reality.

However, without the help of the

# THE CITY BUILDER



Young Men's Library Association it would have been wellnigh impossible for Atlanta to have the great public library as we know it today. The association not only gave to the city all of its books and equipment, but also furnished the money for the purchase of the immensely valuable lot on Forsyth street and Carnegie Way, on which the main library building now stands.

Through the instrumentality of Miss Anne Wallace, the very efficient librarian, additional donations of \$25,000 for the building and \$20,000 for the furniture and equipment were obtained from Mr. Carnegie. In addition, Mr. Carnegie made other donations, for the establishment of branch

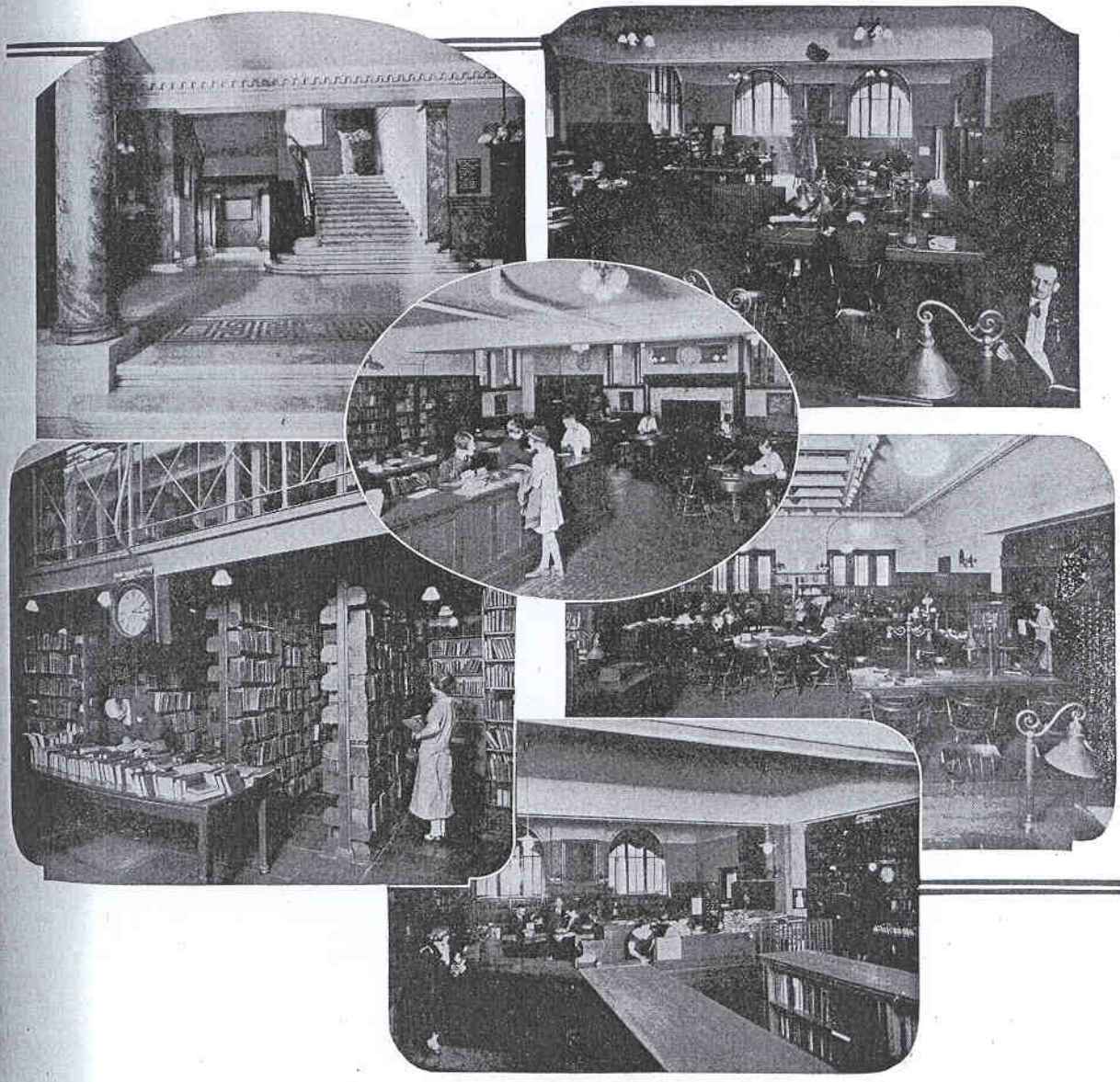
libraries; \$15,000 being given for the Anne Wallace branch on Luckie street, \$17,000 for the South branch on Capitol avenue, and \$25,000 for the colored branch on Auburn avenue.

Probably the most far reaching work that was done by Mr. Carnegie for Atlanta was the arrangement, also through the instrumentality of Miss Wallace, for the establishment of the Library Training School of Atlanta, the only school of this character in the South. The school was made possible by the annual appropriation by Mr. Carnegie of the funds necessary for its support, and this annual appropriation has been continued by the Carnegie Corporation since Mr. Carnegie's death. This school

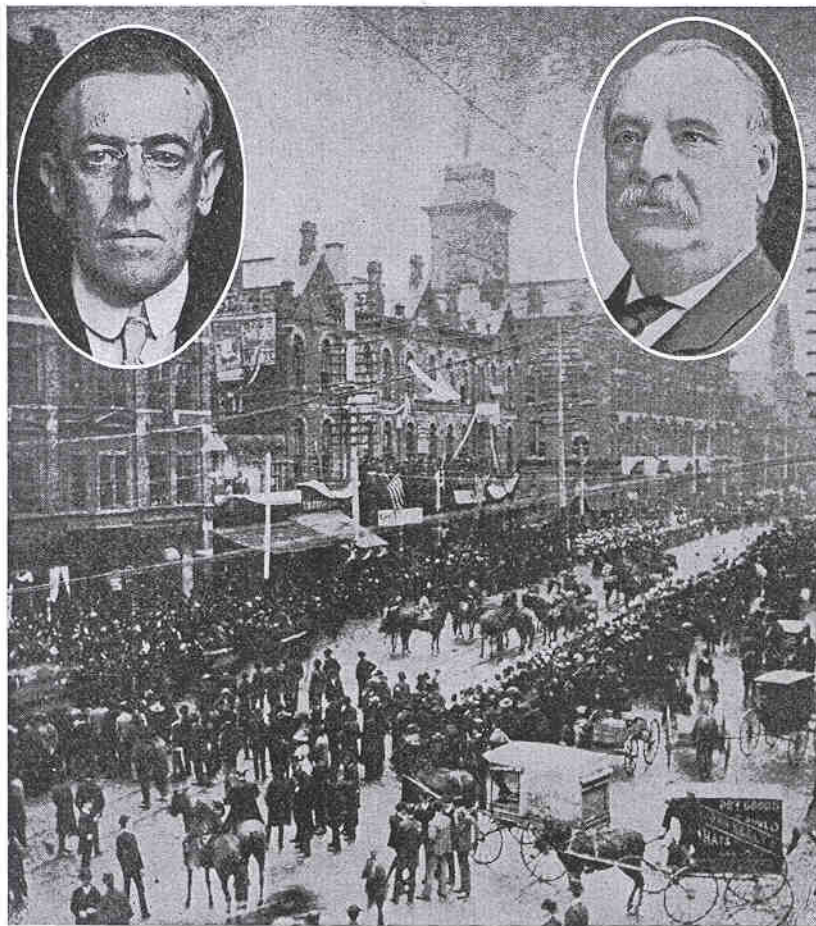
sends out each year its graduates in library work, and these graduates are now doing splendid service all over the country.

A large part of the success of the library has been due to its very efficient librarians.

The first librarian, away back in 1867, was Augustus L. Grant, a member of one of our most prominent pioneer families. After a brief service Mr. Grant resigned to take charge of the transfer to the soldiers' section of Oakland cemetery of the remains of Confederate soldiers which lay buried in graves all over the countryside, and John W. Pearce then acted as librarian for a short time. In 1869 the polished and gallant



Top—The Central Lobby and Stairway; The Magazine and Newspaper Reading Room; Center—The Children's Department; Lower Left—The Stacks; Right; The Reference Rooms; Bottom—The Central Reading Room.



Here is a Picture of a Parade in 1887 When Grover Cleveland Visited Atlanta. This Scene is on Marietta Street at Forsyth. The Young Men's Library Was Then in the Ivan Allen-Marshall Building. In the Same Building Was Woodrow Wilson's Law Office. The Arrow Points to His Office.

Charles Herbst was made librarian, and with the exception of a short intermission in 1872, when Isaac Boring acted as librarian, Mr. Herbst remained in charge until 1876, and under his administration, with Ed L. Grant as assistant (still one of our best known citizens) the library became firmly established.

As showing some of the changes that have taken place since the early days of the library it is interesting to note that the original salary of Mr. Grant as assistant librarian was \$5.00 per month. After several years' service his salary was increased to \$12.50 per month, and Mr. Grant's recollection is that this salary was continued until he resigned to enter other lines of work.

Other librarians in succession, after Mr. Herbst resigned, were E. Bennett Chamberlin, Charles E. Harman (still one of our most prominent citizens), Allie C. Billups, Miss Ida A. Field, Miss Fannie Wallace and Miss Anne

Wallace. During the administration of the last named the old library was merged into the Carnegie Library of Atlanta, Miss Anne Wallace thus becoming the first librarian of the library as we know it today.

During the twenty-five years of its existence the Carnegie Library has had only five head librarians, all animated by the same ideals and the same ambition to so conduct this great public institution as to make it the pride of the whole city.

Miss Wallace, after a most successful administration, resigned in 1908 to become Mrs. Max F. Howland, and was succeeded by Miss Julia Rankin, and Miss Rankin likewise resigned in 1911 to become Mrs. Frank O. Foster. Miss Katherine Wootten took Miss Rankin's place, and continued as librarian until 1914, when she resigned and was succeeded by Mrs. Percival Sneed. In 1915 Mrs. Sneed resigned to become the wife of Mr. Blewett Lee, and was succeeded by Miss Tom-

mie Dora Barker, who is still at the head of the library, and under whose administration the institution has grown to its present splendid position.

There are eight branch libraries, reaching out into almost every section of Atlanta, and other branches are in contemplation to meet the ever growing library needs of the city.

Compared with an initial annual appropriation of \$5,000 twenty-five years ago, the city budget for 1924 provided nearly \$100,000 for the support of the library for the present year. Against less than 20,000 volumes in 1899 the library shelves now contain over 100,000 volumes. From a few hundred members, at the time the old library was merged into the Carnegie Library, there are now nearly 60,000 registered members. Compared with physical assets belonging to the old library of less than \$100,000 the total assets of the Carnegie Library are now over three-quarters of a million dollars.

The main property alone, on Forsyth street and Carnegie Way, is easily worth \$500,000, and it is an interesting fact and a fine tribute to the generosity and unselfish public spirit that animated the officers and directors and members of the old association that this property did not cost the city one single dollar; and too much praise cannot be given to the Young Men's Library Association for its work in bringing about the establishment of the great institution that is doing so much for the educational advancement of the city.

*THEY'S* somethink kindo'  
harty-like about the atmos-  
phere

*When the heat of summer's  
over and the coolin' fall is  
here;*

*The air's so appetizin', and the  
landscape through the haze  
Of a crisp and sunning morn-  
ing of the airy autumn days  
Is a pictur' that no painter has  
the coloring to mock,*

*When the frost is on the pump-  
kin and the fodder's in the  
shock.*

—JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY