

History of Carbon County Library System 1922-1940 as compiled by Rans Baker



In April, 1922, a few Rawlins women, members of the P. E. O. and wives of the members of the Lions Club, got together and began what was called "The Rawlins Reading Room" located in the Osborne Building. Interested persons could visit the Reading Room and choose from 800 books which were solicited and collected through a "sort of house-to-house drive." Within 6 months, 1214 books had checked out and by the end of the next year that number had reached 3434, with 1148 books to choose from.

On September 2, 1924, the name was changed to the Rawlins Public Library. Then in January, 1925, inquiries were made to the Wyoming State Library concerning the advisability of organizing a county library in Rawlins. A committee of citizens met with the County Commissioners with the idea of locating the library within the new high school building which was being constructed at that time. That building was later to become known as the Carbon Building, where the library is located today. A temporary arrangement was made, and on December 1, 1925, the Carbon County Public Library came into being.

Over the next few years, branch libraries sprung up in Hanna, Saratoga and Encampment, along with up to 17 deposit stations scattered throughout the county in places like Baggs, Dixon, Savery, Pedro, Walcott, Leo, Fort Steele, Elk Mountain, Medicine Bow, and Seminoe Dam. In 1937 there were over 9600 books available, with a checkout rate of 42,960 per year. Thirty-six magazines were available, including Colliers, Good Housekeeping, Life, National Geographic, Popular Mechanics, Reader's Digest and Time. County taxes provided \$5267.08 that year.

On the 15th anniversary of the founding of the Library, an organizational meeting was held to form "Friends of the Carbon County Library." The purpose was not only to foster interest in the library, but to sponsor a movement for a new library location. The high school was growing and needed the room which the library had also outgrown, having 9042 books and 50 magazines and newspapers. It was time for a new building.

Talks began in June, 1938, which laid the plans for a joint city-county building, also housing the Carbon County Library. Such a building would be funded by a Public Works grant. The 53 year old county jail had been determined to be unsafe and the city was conducting business "in an old shack." Library circulation had increased to 48,914 books and magazines. However, in July, the County Commissioners discouraged the plan, primarily not wanting to cause confusion over the ownership and identity of the two governmental bodies.

Work began on the new county courthouse, library and jail building in the spring of 1939. On March 20, 1940, the library was opened to the public in the new location—the west half of the ground floor of the Court House Building. Evening hours were made available for the first time. Open hours were 12:30-5:30 and 7-9 weekdays and 10-5:30 on Saturdays.