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Newnan's Original Public Library Celebrates Grand Reopening

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Two views of the adult reading room in the reopened and city-operated Carnegie Library in Newnan.

Newnan's original public library celebrates grand reopening

After a little more than 11 months of construction activity, the highly anticipated grand reopening of the Carnegie took place on Sept. 15, 2009.

In 1904, the original Carnegie Library was opened and remained in service until 1987 when a new facility was constructed. The building became a county courthouse annex for the next 20 years until a new judicial building was completed in 2007, which left the building vacant.

A "Friends of the Carnegie" group formed in an effort to encourage the city of Newnan to bring the library back. After a needs survey was compiled, the local media jumped on board, the mayor lent his support, and the story was chronicled on Glenn Walsh's Web site, <http://www.andrewcarnegie.cc/>.

The 1904 Newnan Carnegie Library is a shining example of the early 20th century beaux arts, neoclassical style of architecture. Some of the exterior representations of this style are: paired brick pilasters symmetrically spread across the façade, angled entry façade facing the city's public square and arched windows

reminiscent of Roman arcades. The building's brick is "salt and pepper," which is unusual for the region but typical for the beaux arts neoclassical in order to make the exterior appear stonelike in lieu of brick.

The interior also reflects this neoclassical style with paneled, stained interior columns spaced evenly throughout the interior space; large beams with classical crown moldings; large-scale fireplace mantles centered in grand spaces; and high ceilings giving the structure an airy, lofty look and feel.

The interior wood finish is called "faux-bois," a French term meaning a false wood finish, which gives the building a stately look. Among the features that have remained intact are the columns, ceilings, fireplace mantles and front staircase.

The city of Newnan partnered with the Newnan Carnegie Library Foundation (formerly the "Friends") to present a Celebration Week that commenced with the Sept. 15 bagpipe procession and ribbon cutting. Throughout the week, other activities included children's story time, historian speakers and a visit

from U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson.

Today's Carnegie is a unique, city facility that has brought back library-type services in the downtown Newnan area. The bottom floor serves as a reading room and the second floor as a meeting space. Among its many offerings, the Carnegie brings popular magazines and newspapers, computer workstations and Wi-Fi access, an art gallery for local exhibits, meeting rooms with warming kitchen and programs for adults and children. Its mission is to provide a central dynamic gathering place that serves residents of all ages and backgrounds as well as community organizations.

The Carnegie was funded by the General Fund and partly by the 2007 special local option sales tax (SPLOST). The Carnegie's cost to the city to be renovated was more than \$1.5 million. Headley Construction Corporation served as the general contractor on the project. Architectural services were provided by Carter Watkins Associates, who succeeded in creating an interior design that was period correct for the early 1900s. ►►