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Athens Regional News and Notes

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Athens Regional news and notes

The Lavonia-Carnegie Library is proudly celebrated its 100th anniversary this year.

To celebrate the centennial anniversary, the Library held a special Open House from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 23. The Friends of the Library served light refreshments, and the Ferst Foundation gave free books to the first 50 children, ages 6 and under, who attended the event.

The Lavonia Women's Club, with 18 members, formed a club library in 1904. Later, the club rented a room and bought additional books to establish a small community library. Miss Leila Stovall was the town's first paid librarian in 1909. The Lavonia Women's Club petitioned the Carnegie Foundation for a \$5,000 grant for library construction, which was originally awarded on February 12, 1910.

In receiving the grant, the Lavonia Town Council agreed to provide \$500 each year for books and upkeep for 10 years. At the end of the decade, the town council took full responsibility for the library until 1974, when the library became a branch of the Athens Regional Library System.

The historic 2,600-square-foot building opened in March 1911, built on land donated by Mr. R.T. Poole. The building, a one-story brick Renaissance Revival-style building with elaborate details, has been an important local landmark throughout its history.

"It's an original Carnegie Library that's still in use as a library. So many are not in use as libraries anymore," said Emma LeCroy, library branch manager. "We have a lot of people stopping in from out of town to see the building, just because it's a Carnegie library, and they want to see inside."

Much has changed at the library since it first opened its doors one hundred years ago. An extensive renovation in the late 1970s added a foyer at the front entrance and an addition at the back of the building. The library's collection itself has grown from a small offering of books

to a full collection of books for all ages, plus audiobooks, DVDs and more.

Technology also has changed. Patrons can now use one of 11 public-access computers to reach the Internet at the Library, or they can visit the Library virtually through its website from the comfort of their own homes.

LeCroy remembers when the library was first computerized 15 years ago. "I was here before we had any kind of computer, and I knew nothing about them. When I first started here, we were signing the cards and filing them away when patrons checked out books. When they brought the book back, we'd put the card back in the book," LeCroy said, "It was the old-fashioned way."

Even with all the changes, much has stayed the same. Story Time, which started in 1914, still entertains families and helps instill a love of literacy for Lavonia youngsters. The Summer Reading Program, which started in 1928, is still popular.

Patrons come to the Library knowing they will find friendly staff who are ready to help them find what they are looking for, be it a children's picture book, an answer to a tricky reference question or a novel by a favorite author. The Library has remained both a physical landmark and a community living room for the residents of Lavonia.

"I'm proud of this building. I'm proud that we have a Carnegie Library," LeCroy said. "I've been coming here since I was a little girl. I can remember checking out books here when I was in kindergarten."

Between 1881 and 1918, Andrew Carnegie donated more than \$28 million to communities across the United States to fund construction of more than 1,600 public and academic libraries, of which Georgia received 29 (24 public, 5 academic). Grants to Georgia communities totaled more than \$610,000.

The Lavonia-Carnegie Library is at 28 Hartwell Road, Lavonia. For information about library services and programs, call the Library at (706) 356-4307. ►►



The Lavonia-Carnegie Library