

## History of the Tulare County Library System

While the purpose of a city library is to provide books *for* the people, a county library system is an active means of getting books *to* the people. In the 1900's the state of California sought to establish a network of libraries which would extend services to rural areas. Tulare County became the fourth county library system established in California. Deposit Stations provided free books from the state library to these areas and was a place where patrons could pick up and return books. The first Deposit Station for the county opened at Dopkin's Furniture Store in Dinuba. Over time, some of the Deposit Stations grew into reading rooms and eventually county library branches.

In 1910, the new county library distribution center was in the basement of the Visalia Carnegie Free Library. For the next twenty years the distribution center moved to various locations in Visalia until 1931 when it moved to Room 10 in the old Tulare County Courthouse. After the earthquake destroyed the old courthouse in 1952, the distribution center moved to various locations until the completion of the new courthouse at Main and Mooney in 1957 where it remained until 1976.

After much debate, the county library building was built in 1976 next to the Visalia City Library. The Visalia City Library eventually closed down and the building was used for storage. On November 22, 1976, the Visalia City/Tulare County Library building was officially opened. This building is the main headquarters for the Tulare County Library System.

In 2005, renovations were started on the Visalia City Library building that had been used for storage. The restored city library building was attached to the Tulare County Library building and became the children's wing. Changes were also made inside and outside to the Tulare County Library building and the work was completed in 2008.

Information taken from Joseph Vicenti's *The Tulare County Library*

## History of the Visalia City Library

The ladies of Visalia in 1879 opened their first reading-room in Good Templars Hall on the corner of Court and Center in Visalia; however, it eventually closed because of organizational difficulties.

Then in 1892, the Women's Christian Temperance Union saw the need for a reading room and formed a Library Association. They rented a storeroom in the Botsford Building on South Court Street. Due to financial difficulties in 1900, the Library

Association moved to the Levi Building where it stayed for two years, rent free. In 1902, the arrangement in the Levi Building was terminated. The books were moved across the street to the Palace Hotel Annex.

The reading room was so popular that in 1902 the city of Visalia applied for a grant from the Andrew Carnegie Foundation. In order to meet the grant's requirements, citizens and businesses had to raise \$1,500 to purchase a lot for the library to be built on. A lot was purchased on Main Street and Cottonwood (now Encina Street). In addition, as part of the agreement for the Carnegie grant, the city had to guarantee not less than a \$1,000 for maintenance annually. The Carnegie Foundation awarded \$10,000 for the construction of the library in 1903. The construction was completed in 1904. The Visalia Carnegie Free Library was opened to the public on June 1, 1904 and remained at this location until 1936.

The new Visalia City Library was constructed at Oak and Encina; it was built with WPA Funds (Works Progress Administration) and opened in August of 1936. This building still exists and became part of the Tulare County Library system.

Information taken from Joseph Vicenti's *The Tulare County Library*