

## Arabut Ludlow Memorial Library Opens

The Ludlow gift of a new library to Monroe offered the most satisfactory way out of the fight that had developed since the selection of the city library site was made. There did not seem to be anyone who wanted to reject the Ludlow offer. Peter Wells had also offered to donate a site for the library on 11th Street east of the Square. Besides the need of a new high school, the city was considering the building of a hospital. Since Carnegie had offered money to the library, some thought that the Ludlow gift might be used to build the new high school.

The controversy continued to play out in the newspaper for the next two weeks. The opinion of the Attorney General of Wisconsin that the city “has no power to repeal the ordinance accepting the Carnegie library gift” was shared on March 21.



This photo, from the collection of the late Albert and Marion Deppler, shows the recently constructed Arabut Ludlow Memorial Library. Thanks to Edwin Ludlow and his brothers, this building was opened on May 22, 1905. The former Presbyterian Church (seen on the right) was razed in 1910.

It was reported on April 13 that Henry Ludlow and Colin Wright would go to look at the Whitewater library the following day. It was under consideration to duplicate the Whitewater building. They also planned to meet L. W. Claude of Claude and Stark, Madison architects, in Milton. At this time, “Misses Treat and Carroll were appointed a committee to secure rooms for temporary housing of the library during the construction of the new building.”

Things were finally starting to progress at this time with no more mention of the Carnegie gift. Claude was at the school board meeting on April 18 where many details of the new building were

decided. The building would be of Bedford stone and Roman brick. The bricks were 12 inches long and 1/2 inch thick, which would give the building a more massive appearance and a prettier wall. The stonework would extend up 5 feet from the ground with the brick above. The interior would be finished in antique oak.

The dimensions of the floor would be 40- by 70-feet. The basement would be 10 feet high and the first story would be 13 1/2 feet high. The basement would have a little audience room, large enough to seat 200 with a rostrum and dressing room. There would also be a fireproof furnace room in the basement. A fireplace would be placed in the reference room on the main floor, which would add greatly to its appearance and add something to ventilation.

The plans for the library were received on May 24; the board advertised for bids on May 31 with sealed bids due by 2:00 p.m., June 21. Bids were to be accompanied by a \$500 certified check to show good faith. The building was to be completed by March 1, 1905. It was shared on June 6 that "above the main entrance on a tablet of Bedford Stone, resting on two pillars, will be the words "Free Library" in raised letters; "Arabut Ludlow Memorial" would be cut into the stone above the door.

Sam Isley and Strause Krise were awarded the contract on June 21 for a cost of \$13,930, which was \$1,430 more than the donation. Henry Ludlow was present and said that the brothers would pay the difference. Local contractors Bauman & Kiester had submitted a bid for \$14,500.

The old library closed at the end of June, so that it could temporarily be housed on the west side of the Square in the Treat block, above the Kneller store. The library opened in its temporary quarters on Thursday, July 7 and would maintain regular library hours. In early September, they announced evening hours.

William Schneider and Fred Engel were injured while removing a ceiling radiator in the basement of the library on the morning of January 10, 1905. They had the radiator loose when the scaffolding broke; both men were struck on the head. Schneider received a long gash in the head, which exposed the skull, and was under the care of Dr. Seiler that afternoon. Engel, however, had his wound dressed and returned to work that day.

The school board met with Mr. Claude on February 14 to discuss details of the furniture. A number of pieces had to be made to order. Monroe Electric Light Company was awarded the contract for power for \$350. The board selected "a fine set of fixtures" and a combination of gas and electric light; there would only be electric light in the basement. Cork carpet for the building would come from Marshall Field & Co.; shades of dark olive green would cover the windows. J. J. Parker, of Madison, did the plumbing.

The Arabut Ludlow Memorial library opened at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, May 22 "and was inspected by a goodly number of library patrons." The editor stated that the "interior of the building is most attractive and inviting, and the result is one that will be highly pleasing to all who visit the building. The pretty and pleasing affects everywhere in evidence show the exercise of good taste in judgment of those who have had to do with this building." He added, "while the building offers ample room for the library to grow, the building has the appearance of being well filled, and all requirements of the library have been met."

On the first day 246 volumes were drawn, setting a record for the library. Many more visited the building without drawing books, which made the day a busy one there. "The library is yours" is what the building committee and the Ludlows said to the people that afternoon. The building was illuminated with electricity throughout for the first time on that Monday evening.

This "beautiful, inviting place" served the community until 1996 when the library moved into the current building - due to the generosity of the Geiger family.