

GLNA  
Greenville-LaGrange Neighborhood Association

December 13, 2007

Re: Fate of Allegheny Carnegie Public Library, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

To Whom It May Concern:

Ten years ago when our neighborhood association formed to fight a rising tide of crime, blight and livability issues, we circulated a “wish list”. At the top of the list was to bring back the beloved Carnegie Library.

The city fathers of that time saw the building as antiquated, too small, old, and not relevant to the 1980’s. That was never the case. No new library building however expensive and state of the art can replace a Carnegie. A Carnegie Library was a heart-felt gift from a one of the most successful men in our country’s history to its people. A pure act of altruism with no political overtones. The way Carnegies were formed made them more than just another city building – maybe it was the rags to riches philanthropist, the first enlightening overture to the masses housed in an elegant building, the feeling that this is “our” library –for us - not just another government-funded building project. For generations these libraries have been the “light” in many dark lives. Memories of the best kind were made there. If ever a building had a soul, it is a Carnegie.

Our unsolicited advice is to not make the mistake our town made. When the new library was built, it was thought the Carnegie would remain a library. However, it was dismantled. Andrew Carnegie’s portrait, which was hand-delivered by Mrs. Carnegie to Newnan with much pomp and ceremony, was taken away. Our Carnegie became a county courtroom, court offices, holding cells etc, and instead of being a happy place, it became very sad. The death of this legacy tore our town apart. Today, after twenty years, you would think that harsh feelings would subside. But they did not. There was terrible animosity towards the city. When the county moved out, we made our move and founded the “Friends of the Carnegie” and the campaign began. In addition, our newspaper and library aficionados throughout the country lent their very vocal support. A few weeks ago, with the full backing of the mayor and the city council, the Carnegie Library was officially returned to library services. This was by far the most popular move any city council has ever made in this town.

Please consider keeping your treasure intact. It has a meaning no other library will have.

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