MUNICIPALITY OF PORT HOPE

HERITAGE DESIGNATION

Address: 31 Queen Street

Known as: Port Hope Public Library

Architectural Style: Classic Revival

Date Built: Circa 1912

Date Designated: October 6, 1997 to By-Law No. 44/97, SCHEDULE B-1

Lot Description: RP 14 LOT 17 LOT 18 LOT 40; LOT 19 PT



Architectural Description

The original 1912 Carnegie Library, designed by Walter Mahoney, is a simple centre hall plan with the main floor on the second level containing the adult library and the lower level containing the children's library and the boiler room. As previously outlined, this is the prototypical Carnegie library plan, which has served so many communities well for almost a century.

The architectural style is Greek Revival, a style prevalent at the time and one which most Carnegie Libraries embraced due to its association with democracy and intellectual pursuits. The Port Hope Library had a large Portico entrance with a broad set of steps leading to the front door. The Portico was graced with large precast columns with Ionic capitals. The columns support a simple frieze and pediment made of wood and unadorned. The columns were supported by a masonry base flaring to accommodate a wide curved stair. The front door was a glazed wood door with a half round glass transom with an exaggerated precast lintel. The corners of the front facade had brick pilasters terminated in Ionic capitals matching the entrance columns.

The lower floor of the building was constructed with precast masonry units resembling cut stone, while the upper floor is red brick. Two large curved head windows adorned the front facade, one of which is still intact. These windows also have the exaggerated precast lintel and keystone elements. The side elevations were simpler with large double hung windows with precast sills and lintels. The north facade has a delightful children's entrance with Ionic capped pilasters and a curved porch roof which originally had large chains for originally the door was a large wood plank door and the whole entrance must have been one of delight and mystery for the children who used it.

The rear of the building was very utilitarian with high windows on the second floor allowing stacks to be placed against the walls for efficiency. It is unfortunate that views of the river were not considered, but it is possible that at the time, there were other buildings blocking that view. No other buildings during that period paid much, if any, respect for the Ganaraska River, the reason for Port Hope's existence.

The roof of the building is a cottage-style now clad with brown asphalt shingles. From earlier photos it would appear that the roof was either slate, but more likely metal shingles.

Historical Abstract

The history of the library in Port Hope begins with establishment of the Mechanics Institute in 1852. For several years a library and reading room was maintained on an upper floor of the Wilson Block over Robert Deyell's Drugstore (70-76 Walton Street) at the corner of Ontario and Walton. There were approximately sixty members and the membership cost was $4.00 a year for daytime use, and $2.00 per year for evening use. The collection consisted of 750 books that were later sold to the YMCA.

The Institute was reestablished by 1874 and the collection reached 5000 volumes by the turn of the century. It was briefly located in the E.P. Smith Block (34-46 Walton Street). At the turn of the century, it was located over the Times office, the eastern unit in the Gillett Paterson Block (29-33 Walton Street).

Between 1903 and 1924, over one hundred public libraries were constructed in Ontario as a result of grants from Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919), the Scottish born American industrialist and philanthropist, under the auspices of the Carnegie Corporation. The grant would cover the cost of construction of a building with the only restriction being the library would be open to the public free of charge. Preference was given to small rather than large communities, and the amount of the grant was related to the size of the population. Initially the design of the library buildings was left to the individual town, but as this process became more difficult to administer through the Carnegie Corporation, the building plans became more standardized.

Most of the original Carnegie libraries have been renovated or modified for alternate use. Of the sixty-six libraries designated as heritage properties, the majority are Carnegie Libraries. Port Hope's Carnegie Library underwent major renovations and expansion in 2002.



The Port Hope Carnegie Library, (Photo: East Durham Historical Society)



Architectural Detail

The new addition added to the Port Hope Carnegie Library in 2002.