

# Moose Jaw Library

## A Work of Art

**T**HE MOOSE JAW PUBLIC LIBRARY, an architectural jewel in the heart of downtown Moose Jaw, right in the middle of beautiful Crescent Park, is a building that drops jaws and turns hearts.

Officially opened in 1913, this building was Moose Jaw's answer to the refusal of the Carnegie Endowment to assist the city in establishing a library of its own.

The Carnegie Endowment, which had funded libraries in other communities like Regina and North Battleford, rejected Moose Jaw's 1911 request for \$50,000 to construct a library. It was felt that Moose Jaw's plans for the new library were too ambitious for a city its size.

City leaders ignored this setback and spent \$100,000 of city money (borrowed) and built the library that was designed to handle the needs of a population five times greater than Moose Jaw had at the time.

Construction started in 1912 and was completed in 1913. The



construction company was Lyall & Sons.

The library was designed by the architects Reid and McAlpine and followed traditional designs with state of the art interior features of the era, such as stylish electric lighting and glass floors allowing natural light to flood all areas.

The exterior design is “Classical Revival” and shows somewhat “Italiante” or “Palladian” detailing. The architect was doing a personal take on 15th century Italian Renaissance architecture.

Typical classical features would include the symmetrical facade, the ornament above the windows, the interior dome and column capitols.

The interior contains the most marble of any building in Saskatchewan, second only to the Provincial Legislative Building. The library had been built from special plans and was considered “a jewel of architecture.”

The City of Moose Jaw proved the Carnegie Endowment wrong during the 1930's when the library experienced an explosion of use.

On one Saturday, 1,500 people went to the library and checked out books. This was one out of every 15



Photos by Lynne J. McDonald



Moose Jaw residents visited the library that day.

Literature and writing bloomed in Moose Jaw during the Thirties, and still does today.

The Moose Jaw Library was the

first library in Saskatchewan to set up an Archives section. Leith Knight, Moose Jaw's most recognized historian, created the archives system in 1961, while working at the library in the refer-

ence section. The filing system is still in use today.

The library was expanded in 1993 and became what is now known as the Moose Jaw Public Library/Art Museum/Theatre Com-

plex. The theatre seats 135.

The 1993 additions to the library are sympathetic to the original architecture and have enhanced the offerings of the library, which continue to be well used today. W

• *Submitted by Brian Bell, Dr. Rod Stutt and Lynne J. McDonald*

