Fall 2015

One County, Two Libraries: Watsonville and the Organizing of the Santa Cruz County Library System, 1900-1930

David Robert Addison
San Jose State University

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.4dzp-89am>
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ONE COUNTY, TWO LIBRARIES: WATSONVILLE AND THE ORGANIZING OF
THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM, 1900-1930

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Information

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Library and Information Science

by

David Addison

December 2015

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The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

ONE COUNTY, TWO LIBRARIES: WATSONVILLE AND THE ORGANIZING OF
THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM, 1900-1930

by

David Addison

APPROVED FOR THE SCHOOL OF INFORMATION

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2015

Dr. Debra Hansen

School of Information

Dr. Kristen Rebmann

School of Information

Sharyn Schwab

Librarian, Santa Cruz Public Library

ABSTRACT

ONE COUNTY, TWO LIBRARIES: WATSONVILLE AND THE ORGANIZING OF THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM, 1900-1930

by David Addison

This thesis investigates the creation of California's Free County Library System during the Progressive Era. Previous histories of the topic have conveyed a partial picture of those involved in organizing county libraries, focusing on leaders at the state level, such as James L. Gillis and Harriet Eddy. Using Santa Cruz County as a case study, this thesis examines the overall process of organizing a county library system at the local level.

Primary source materials consulted include correspondence and publications from the California State Library, newspaper accounts from the time period, California Library Association meeting minutes, *News Notes of California Libraries*, and local records from Santa Cruz County. This study discusses the Progressive Era's influence on California county library organizing in general and Santa Cruz County libraries in particular. It also considers how the Progressive Movement affected the rising power of women's groups and their invaluable work organizing public libraries. In addition, the thesis explores the early development of reading rooms and libraries in Santa Cruz County and the creation of the area's first county library system. The thesis pays particular attention to the early history of the Watsonville Public Library and its adamant stance against joining the Santa Cruz County library system. Based on comparative histories of the two library systems, the thesis concludes with an analysis of the positive and negative characteristics of a countywide library system versus an independent city library.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my warmest appreciation to the many people who encouraged me and assisted me throughout this process. Writing the thesis has been one of the greatest endeavors of my life and I could not have succeeded without the following people. I would like to thank the staff at the California State Library and State Archives. I would also like to thank the reference staff at Santa Cruz Public Library for helping find the many local resources necessary for completing my research. The reference staff at Watsonville Public Library were most helpful and supportive in the best of ways. Reagan Huerta from the Pajaro Valley Historical Society was especially helpful in finding local Watsonville history sources including information regarding the Watsonville Public Library. I would like to thank my thesis committee members Sharyn Schwab and Kristen Rebmman for their keen eye and overall support. In particular I could not have finished this great undertaking without the unwavering and enthusiastic support from my thesis advisor, Debra Hansen. I could not have written my thesis without her and will be forever grateful. Lastly, I would like to give deep gratitude to my wife Watonka and my two sons Braelen and Skyler for standing by me through thick and thin while I spent over a year of my life dedicated to this project.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the creation of the Free County Library System in California during the Progressive Era. Spearheaded by State Librarian James L. Gillis and his talented, hardworking library staff, it was a propitious time for the development of a statewide library system. During the Progressive Era, many were concerned about reforming government and expanding its responsibilities and services. This political movement also promoted the professionalization and expansion of library services, giving special momentum to the idea of a statewide county library system.

The innocent observer might think that the creation of a free county library system would be embraced by all and would be created with ease. However, not all communities wanted a county system, including several of the towns in Santa Cruz County. Why would there be resistance to free county library service in Santa Cruz County? Why did California State Library organizer, Harriet Eddy, practically get run out of town when she visited the City of Watsonville in particular? This thesis seeks to answer these questions.

This thesis fills several significant gaps in the history of the country library movement and California library history generally. Current historiography on the development of California's county libraries emphasizes the role of State Librarian James Gillis and other high profile men who were involved in planning the system. Library leaders, in general, were predominately male, and some historians, such as Michael Harris, have argued that their aims were not altruistic, but politically motivated and

elitist.¹ By looking at the motivations and goals of California's county library organizers at the local level, this study sheds new light on this on-going debate in the literature.

This study also uncovers the role that women played in the development of California's county libraries. The county library organizers employed by the state library were all women (including Mabel Prentiss, Bertha Kumli, May Henshall, and Harriet Eddy), yet their work in developing the county system has largely gone unnoticed. Moreover, the librarians working in Santa Cruz County were also female. This thesis demonstrates the role of these women in establishing and developing the county library system as well.

Another understudied topic that this thesis addresses is the resistance of many communities to the state library's county library plan and how this resistance was overcome. Using Santa Cruz County as a case study, this study considers the political climate of organizing a public agency on a state and county level and the effort it took to fulfill the lofty goal of providing free library service for all communities. Also explored is the extent to which a community benefited from the implementation of a county library system and, conversely, what was lost.

The issues and questions raised in this thesis continue to be as relevant today as they were during the early part of the twentieth century. Library legislation is just as complex and involves many stakeholders. Some decisions about the health of libraries remain in the hands of state and even national politicians who usually do not have an

¹Michael H. Harris, *The Purpose of the American Public Library in Historical Perspective: A Revisionist Interpretation* (Washington, D.C.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Library and Information Sciences, 1972).

educated perspective on effective library service. Furthermore, women still constitute a majority of library staff, but do not make up the majority of library directors, state leaders, and politicians who make decisions regarding libraries. Lastly, there continues to be an ongoing debate regarding local control versus county or state control and which direction libraries will take in the future.

Literature Review

Many historical studies of California libraries contain information about free county library organizing in the state. These publications provide various perspectives which help form a larger picture of the history of California's county library movement. The most prevalent theme in the histories of California's county library system is the pivotal role played by James L. Gillis, state librarian from 1899 to 1917 and author of the original county library legislation. Most historians have glowing reviews of Gillis and his work to promote the county system for California.² In addition to lauding Gillis, most studies note the role played by the California Library Association officers, prominent politicians, and other business and library leaders at the time.

Perhaps the most exemplary account of James Gillis and the creation of the county library system is provided by Harriet G. Eddy in her reminiscences titled *County Free Library Organizing in California, 1909-1918*.³ Andrew Horn introduces the book

² Harriet G. Eddy, *County Free Library Organizing in California* (Berkeley, CA: Committee on California Library History, Bibliography, and Archives of the California Library Association, 1955); John D. Henderson, "Rise of the County Public Library," *California Librarian* 39 (January 1978): 16-23; Grace Murray, "James L. Gillis and CLA", *California Librarian* 18 (October 1957): 231-36.

³ Eddy, *County Free Library Organizing*.

and suggests that it is not a complete, critical narrative history, but rather “vignettes of California Library organization.”⁴ In the early 1950s, the California Library Association’s Committee on Library History asked Eddy, a former state library staff member, to write about the history of the county system. Eddy praises Gillis for modernizing California libraries, stating that his work was ahead of its time, especially compared to other states. She also explains how Gillis used his political status to acquire the position of state librarian and then used these connections to enact county library legislation in 1909.

Like Eddy, most other authors focus their histories on the role of Gillis and the politics involved in gaining acceptance of the county library system. For example, an article written by John D. Henderson entitled “Rise of the County Public Library” argues that it is oversimplified to say that California was “ripe” for county library organizing during the early 1900s.⁵ It is more appropriate, contends Henderson, to look at the favorable conditions that existed in the state during the 1890s. Three conditions are worth mentioning here: first, California’s prosperity at the time and its future prospects for industrial growth in areas such as agriculture and mineral resources; second, the prominence of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company and State Librarians Gillis’s past connection as the railroad’s former employee and political advocate; and third, the rise of farm and rural interests, such as the newly formed farm bureaus, granges and agriculture extension services, which also advocated for expanding the state’s access to books and libraries. According to Henderson, it was “the political domination of the

⁴ Ibid., Introduction.

⁵ Henderson, “Rise of the County Public Library.”

state by the Southern Pacific and the fact that State Librarian Gillis had once been the company's legislative representative that made the new county library legislation possible."⁶ Henderson goes on to discuss the close relationship Librarian Gillis had with county librarians throughout the state, which also helped solidify his power and make the county library program succeed.

Other authors, including Peter Conmy and Grace Murray, offer more praise for Gillis in the founding of the state's county library system. In his article "James L. Gillis and California Library Legislation 1899-1917," Conmy describes Gillis as a "social realist" and argues that he was successful in part because he recognized the lack of culture and education in the Wild West, hence his push for public libraries.⁷ Conmy supports Henderson's contention that Gillis was able to pass county library legislation because of his strong leadership and administrative abilities and similarly explores how Gillis used his political connections to enact the law. Also like Henderson, Conmy gives a nod to Gillis's time spent with Southern Pacific as well as his long residence in Sacramento, which added to his influence in the state capitol.

Grace Murray, in her article "James Gillis and CLA," likewise credits Gillis with making the county libraries succeed.⁸ She states that Gillis had the organizing ability and shrewd business acumen to take charge of libraries across the state. As she explains:

⁶ Ibid., 16.

⁷ P. T. Conmy, "Gillis and California Library Legislation 1899-1917," *California Librarian* 18 (October 1957): 227-31.

⁸ Murray, "James L. Gillis and CLA," 231-36.

He coordinated and consolidated each and every library activity and resource in California to their mutual benefit: the State Library, subscription libraries, and community reading clubs, city and county public libraries, school library service, professional training agencies, the CLA. Under his inspiration and diligent guidance they soon were all working together in development of extremely effective statewide library systems.⁹

Library historian Ray E. Held has also examined the creation of California's county libraries, giving much credit to Gillis as well. According to Held, Gillis's appointment as state librarian "was a turning point in the history of the State Library and California Librarianship."¹⁰ Held goes on to credit Gillis for his efforts in "nurturing the County library plan" and thus bringing California libraries onto the American library scene.¹¹

The most in-depth treatment of county library organizing is Hannah Kunkle's dissertation, "A Historical Study of the Extension Activities of the California State Library With Particular Emphasis on its Role in Rural Library Development, 1850-1966".¹² In this comprehensive survey of the state library's history, Kunkle captures the political landscape during the crucial period within which county library organizing took place. She also examines the role Gillis played in designing the county library plan. As Kunkle explains:

⁹ Ibid., 231.

¹⁰ Ibid., 105.

¹¹ Ray E. Held, *The Rise of the Public Library in California* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1973), 144.

¹² Hannah Kunkle, "A Historical Study of the Extension Activities of the California State Library With Particular Emphasis on its Role in Rural Library Development, 1850-1966" (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1969).

Gillis felt there must be a way to make the State Library reach all the people of the state, town dweller and country dweller alike. It seemed to Gillis that the county library was the logical unit because it was of workable size and was better able to furnish adequate financial support. With each county carrying on library work, the entire state would receive local service. The answer to the book needs of the rural residents appeared to rest in the development of county libraries.¹³

Kunkle concludes by observing that the role Gillis played was that of power broker between Sacramento politicians and the state library. Gillis was a tireless promoter of the county library plan, an architect of the California county library system, and an inspirational leader for all stakeholders of the county libraries.

The most recent article touching on the history of California's country libraries is Debra Hansen's 2013 article, "Depoliticizing the California State Library: The Political and Professional Transformation of James Gillis, 1899-1917."¹⁴ Hansen discusses how Gillis was able to remove political influence in staff appointments not only in the state library but in the county libraries as well. According to Hansen, Gillis achieved this by including in the county library law the stipulation that county librarians had to have professional training and library experience. He then supported this policy by creating a professional training program at the state library to prepare individuals for the newly created county posts.

While the creation of a statewide county library system was no small feat, Gillis has garnered more historical attention than any other librarian to date. There are,

¹³ Ibid., 104.

¹⁴ Debra Gold Hansen, "Depoliticizing the California State Library: The Political and Professional Transformation of James Gillis, 1899-1917," *Information and Culture* 48, no.1 (2013): 68-90.

however, two articles devoted to women library organizers that should be mentioned here. The first is John Richardson's "Harriet G. Eddy (1876–1966): California's First County Library Organizer and Her Influence on USSR Libraries."¹⁵ Hired by the state library in 1909, Eddy was the foremost organizer of California county libraries during the Progressive Era, and Richardson's article details the powerful role she played in convincing local communities to endorse the county library plan. Richardson argues that Eddy was so successful at organizing that she was invited to share her knowledge with the USSR during her travels there in 1927. Given Eddy's accomplishments, Richardson expresses surprise that her contribution to California library history is so little known. He surmises that perhaps it is because she was not a professionally trained librarian. Nonetheless, his article fills a significant gap in the historical literature.

Another important addition to the literature is an article written by Denise Sallee entitled "Reconceptualizing Women's History: Anne Hadden and the California County Library System."¹⁶ Sallee's article highlights the role that women played in organizing California's county libraries, focusing on the work of Anne Hadden, the first county librarian in Monterey County. Sallee also considers the important role played by other women librarians in developing the county library system, particularly the contributions of state library employees Harriet Eddy, Bertha Kumli, and Mabel Prentiss, who traveled throughout the state assisting counties in developing their library systems.

¹⁵ John Richardson, "Harriet G. Eddy (1876–1966): California's First County Library Organizer and Her Influence on USSR Libraries," *California State Library Foundation Bulletin* 94 (2009): 2–13.

¹⁶ Denise Sallee, "Reconceptualizing Women's History: Anne Hadden and the California County Library System." *Libraries & Culture* 27, no. 4 (Fall 1992): 351-77.]

As this literature review has shown, most historical studies of California's county library system focus on State Librarian James Gillis and other state library employees, with scant attention given to the small-town residents, particularly the women librarians who made the county library system a reality. This thesis will address this neglect by studying the history of the Santa Cruz County Library System and the people who made it happen.

Theoretical Approach and Organization

The historiography of California's county libraries could benefit from a local history perspective. As the literature review shows, much of the historical writing is from the 1950s to the 1980s and focuses on high profile library and political leaders, namely James Gillis, county library organizers, and representatives from the California Library Association. Yet, there were many ordinary people, particularly librarians, in towns throughout the state who helped shape the county system in their community. Another issue that has not been fully considered is the fact that many communities, including Watsonville in Santa Cruz County, opposed the county library plan, preferring to maintain local control. A case study of the Santa Cruz County Library System, then, provides the opportunity to look beyond the state politics involved in the founding of California's county library system and tell the story of the people who made it a reality.

The thesis begins by observing on the effects of the Progressive Era on California. Chapter one assesses the impact of the Progressive Movement on the California State Library and Santa Cruz County, followed by a discussion of county library organizing in California. It then explains county library organizing in Santa Cruz County, emphasizing

the key issues and debates that arose. Chapter two focuses on the early library history of Santa Cruz County and the establishment of the Santa Cruz County Library system. Major topics include the early reading rooms and libraries in Santa Cruz, the founding of the Boulder Creek reading room, Harriet Eddy's visit to Santa Cruz in 1909 and the seven-year conversation which took place before the county library plan was adopted. There is also a section devoted to the two Santa Cruz librarians who applied for the county librarian position. The chapter concludes with how Santa Cruz City contributed to the establishment of the county library system.

Chapter three encompasses the history of the Watsonville Public Library and its refusal to join the Santa Cruz County library system. It describes the pioneering library organizations in Watsonville, the founding and early years of the Watsonville Public Library, and the building of Watsonville's Carnegie Library. Watsonville's experience with county library organizing is discussed before concluding with an analysis of why Watsonville refused to join the county system. Chapter four compares the county and city libraries in Santa Cruz County between 1916 and 1926. The main points of comparison are funding and staffing; collections and usage and the administration of each library system. Chapter four also includes a discussion regarding public support of libraries throughout the county and concludes with a comparative summary of the Santa Cruz County system and Watsonville Public Library. This thesis contributes to the understanding of the development of California's county library organizing by analyzing the experience of an individual county. It shows how county library organizing on the local level was motivated to a great extent by passionate librarians and civic leaders

rather than state-level politics with some exceptions. It also explores why some cities refused to join the county library system and the consequences of that decision. Finally, the comparative data provided in this thesis furthers the conversation as to the benefits and costs of merging libraries into one, countywide system.

Chapter 1

The Progressive Era's Impact on California, the State Library, and Santa Cruz County, 1900-1929

The Progressive Era and accompanying reform movement in California are very important in understanding the origin and development of the state's county library system during the early part of the twentieth century. Progressivism in California served as a catalyst for change in government agencies and public institutions, which up until that time had been dominated by corporate interests and political insiders. Tired of the undue influence of monopolies such as the Southern Pacific Railroad in state and local politics, citizen groups demanded that public institutions and utilities be reformed so that they were truly run for and by the people. Women, who gained the vote in California in 1911, were particularly influential in Progressive reform, which provided the means and motivation for them to become involved in public policy making and political action. With so much attention being given to government and business reform, California State Librarian, James L. Gillis, and his supporters were able to harness this energy to bring about a better service model for public libraries as well. The most important change was the development of a statewide county library system.

The Progressive Movement in California

“Progressivism, we are told, helped transform the United States from an agricultural nation, owned by an omnipotent oligarchy and governed by the corrupt party machines which the oligarchy subsidized, into an urban industrial society that had begun

to put its political house in good order.”¹ This overview of progressivism given by historian and former state librarian, Kevin Starr, establishes a good starting point for discussing the Progressive movement in California. According to Starr, Progressivism brought a “system and benevolence to a haphazard, frequently cruel and capricious Republic. Progressivism was energized by forces bubbling up from deep within the collective Protestant bourgeois psyche.”²

The Progressive movement in California contained two overarching goals that aimed at using government regulation to curb both economic and political corruption in the state. The two major players in California’s reform movement were then-Governor Hiram Johnson, who ran for governor on an anti-Southern Pacific Railroad ticket, and the State Federation of Labor. Working together, they helped give citizens direct access to the legislative process by successfully passing two ballot initiatives, referendum and recall. Through these initiatives, voters gained the power to veto existing legislation and to recall or remove elected officials. The goal was to weaken the grip that corporate interests and party bosses had on the social and political fabric of California.

Between 1910 and 1914, Governor Johnson and his Progressive supporters used other new regulations to break up the largest economic and political machine in the state, the Southern Pacific Railroad Corporation. This was accomplished by first passing the Public Utilities Act and then creating the Public Utility Commission. This enabled the state to regulate Southern Pacific as a public utility, thus disrupting its economic

¹Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California through the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 199.

² Ibid.

monopoly and disabling its ability to fix rates. The California Progressives then worked to end Southern Pacific's political stranglehold on the state by dismantling the patronage political system. This was accomplished by instituting a direct primary system for voters and by cross-filing Republican and Democratic candidates. These actions took away the control and dominance of party bosses within the state's two-party system and returned it to the voters.

In addition to reforming California's political system, Progressives sought to modernize government and business agencies. Their main goal was to use science, technology, expertise, and education to systematize and professionalize government work for the benefit of the people. These ideals would eventually lead the state library to streamline and modernize its service. This was accomplished by professionalizing library employment and establishing a variety of new statewide library programs. A committed Progressive, State Librarian James Gillis, was particularly interested in making library service more attuned to the public's needs and finding an efficient way of getting books to people throughout the state, especially in rural areas. This goal would lead to the development of a statewide county library program overseen by the state library.³

The Progressive Era also stimulated a dramatic increase in women's power within state politics and social reform. As Kevin Starr explains,

³For more information regarding the Progressive Era in California please refer to: Heather A. Haveman et al., "The Winds of Change: The Progressive Movement and the Bureaucratization of Thrift," *American Sociological Review* 72 (February 2007): 117-42.; J. L. Gillis, "State Library Administration," *Library Journal* 30 (September 1905): 37; Curtis E. Grassman, "Prologue to California Reform: The Democratic Impulse, 1886-1898," *Pacific Historical Review* 42 (November 1973): 518-36.

Into this club, this expanding California, women sought further admittance and an expansion of opportunity. Their struggle—whether it be the right to practice medicine or to go before the bar, to vote and run for office or to work as staff reporters for William Randolph Hearst at the San Francisco Examiner, to dance (as in the case of Isadora Duncan) in a new expressive medium or (as in the case of the Dress Reform League at the newly established Stanford University) to walk free of imprisoning corsets--added to the cumulative reform sentiment gathering strength in California.⁴

Women in California seized this momentum and contributed significantly to the Progressive movement. Women activists desired to renew America's commitment for direct representation by the people in government and organized various women's clubs and civic groups to achieve their goals. As historian, Gayle Gullett states,

They called their activism "civic altruism" because they understood politics to mean partisan activities, and, like many other affluent white Americans of the era, they equated partisanship with corruption. Club women labeled their public deeds as altruistic to separate themselves from corrupt politics to underscore that they were performing in public the same tasks of moral guardianship that they had previously done in private spaces.⁵

Women's clubs, such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Federation of Women's Clubs, sought to address concerns over education, healthcare, and political corruption. However, their primary focus was on suffrage. According to the Women of the West Museum,

White middle class women's clubs, unions, church groups, black self-help groups, temperance groups and Socialists all incorporated the suffrage issue into their day to day grassroots community work. They believed that if women could vote, they could clean up dirty politics and cure social ills

⁴ Starr, *Inventing the Dream*, 218.

⁵ Gayle Gullett, *Becoming Citizens: The Emergence and Development of the California Women's Movement, 1880-1911* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 107.

like child labor, prostitution and poverty. Disenfranchisement became a powerful symbol that unified women from all walks of life.⁶

As a result of this coordinated effort, California's diverse club women not only achieved suffrage in 1911, they successfully pushed through other social reforms, including minimum wage, an eight-hour workday for women, and a new Industrial Safety Commission.

It is important to note, however, that the majority of Progressive activists were upper-class citizens who had the free time and resources to pursue such efforts.⁷ Moreover, certain groups were wary of the Progressives' agenda, such as the working class who suspected that white upper-middle-class and upper-class citizens would not represent their interests. Historian Robert D. Johnston makes the argument that a majority of Progressives were pro-capitalist and individualists to the extreme thus leading to a great mistrust by the working class who were more concerned with workers' rights than the elite capitalist class goals and values.⁸ The distrust was ultimately unfounded, as over one hundred bills were passed by the California State Legislature between 1910 and 1914 that benefitted the labor movement and the average working person to a great degree.⁹

⁶ "Women of the West Museum," www.theautry.org.

⁷ Mary Ann Mason Burki, "The California Progressives: Labor's Point of View" *Labor History* 17 (Winter 1976): 24-37.

⁸ Robert D. Johnston, "Re-democratizing the Progressive Era: The Politics of Progressive Era Political Historiography," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 1 (January 2002): 68-92.

⁹ Burki, "The California Progressives" 24-37.

Despite a lack of support from certain sectors of society, California citizens generally welcomed the Progressives' goals to limit monopolies' political power, professionalize government agencies, and eliminate the pervasive spoils system throughout the state. These new political ideals also impacted the world of libraries, librarianship, and the library service model of the time. Many librarians, including California State Librarian James Gillis, adopted the Progressive reform agenda, which helped pave the way for meaningful changes to how rural and urban Californians received library services. This momentum would ultimately result in the creation of a new county library system that would revolutionize library service throughout the state.

The California State Library and Progressive Reform

Given Southern Pacific's negative reputation during the Progressive Era, it is ironic that James L. Gillis, California State Librarian from 1900 to 1917, was a former employee of this railroad behemoth. Indeed, Gillis used his position within the railroad's administration to secure his appointment as state librarian in 1899, which up until that time had been controlled by special interests. Gillis, however, would become a strong advocate of Progressive reform and an agent for change in library service throughout the state.¹⁰

James L. Gillis was born on October 3, 1857, in Richmond, Iowa. He moved with his family by ox-train to Nevada when he was four, and six years later the family moved to Sacramento to make their permanent home. Gillis's formal education ended before he was fifteen when he began working for the Sacramento Valley Railroad. He stayed with

¹⁰ "James L. Gillis," *Public Libraries* 22 (October, 1917): 309.

the railroad company, which was part of the powerful Southern Pacific Railroad system, for his entire career, rising to the rank of assistant superintendent. After retiring in 1894, Gillis became more involved in California's state government, serving as the clerk of the Committee on Ways and Means of the General Assembly during three legislative sessions in 1895, 1897, and 1899. In between sessions, he worked with the state archives and, for a brief time, was also a deputy in the State Library.¹¹

According to library historian Ray Held, "Among the possible appointments in the state government, that of librarian had become particularly attractive to Gillis."¹² Although unsuccessful in his first attempt to secure the office in 1898, when the position came open again the following year, Gillis successfully used his connections within both the Republican Party and the Southern Pacific Railroad to win the nomination. He assumed the state librarian post on April 1, 1899.¹³

Library historians have proposed different explanations for Gillis's interest in becoming state librarian. Ray Held notes that although Gillis "was not an extremely bookish man, in either the literary or bibliographic sense, he was an effective administrator who observed that the State Library was not operating at full capacity." Held suggests that the state librarian position thus "offered a congenial opportunity to practice sound management while rendering a real public service."¹⁴ Historian Debra

¹¹ *Dictionary of American Library Biography*, s.v. "Gillis, James Louis," by Ray E. Held (Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1978); Peter Thomas Conmy, "James Louis Gillis, Westerner and Librarian: A Professional Biography," *Wilson Library Bulletin* 34 (December 1959): 272-83.

¹² Held, *Dictionary of American Library Biography*, s.v. "Gillis, James Louis."

¹³ Hansen, "Depoliticizing the California State Library, 71.

¹⁴ Held, *Dictionary of American Library Biography*, s.v. "Gillis, James Louis."

Hansen, on the other hand, argues that it was the culture of political spoils that propelled Gillis into state office. “Gillis was not a lawyer or a scholar,” Hansen writes, nor was he “schooled in rare books.” Instead, she maintains, Gillis’s “state library appointment was based strictly on his political connections and personal ties to the Southern Pacific Railroad.”¹⁵ Ironically, within a few years Gillis would become one of the major advocates of Progressive reform in California. Indeed, when the California Progressive Party was formed in 1914, Gillis was one of the first state officials to join.¹⁶

Among Gillis’s chief concerns as state librarian was the improvement of internal operations of the library and the expansion of its services. At the time, the 100,000 volumes owned by the library were restricted to state officers and the judiciary. The general public only had access to the collection for in-person reference services. One of Gillis’s first changes in library policy was to allow the circulation of the state library’s collections to the general public. Another of Gillis’s early projects was the development of “traveling libraries,” small rotating collections dispatched to rural communities, study clubs, local libraries, and, in some circumstances, individuals. The state library also began a books for the blind program in 1904.

Another of Gillis’s priorities which reflected his growing Progressive ideals was the professionalization of the state library’s staff. He believed that the state library, as well as any other state offices, should be apolitical and run by people with professional credentials and experience. His plan to limit patronage appointments in the state library

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

advanced in March 1906 when the library trustees, now headed by Oakland librarian Charles Greene, passed new “Rules for Library Service.”¹⁷ Preceding California’s civil service law by seven years, these rules were the first civil service code adopted by a California state agency. Dividing the library’s workforce into graded and ungraded categories, the code stipulated that all graded position applicants pass an exam and have “a satisfactory record of library experience.”¹⁸ The rules also created an apprenticeship program to help aspiring librarians enter the profession. This program became a formal professional library school run by the state library in 1914.¹⁹

During this time, Gillis was becoming deeply involved with organizing and promoting the professional activities of librarians throughout the state. He was elected president of the Library Association of California in 1906, which changed its name to the California Library Association [CLA] per Gillis’s suggestion.²⁰ Gillis then used his leadership in CLA to involve rank-and-file professionals in discussing and planning for a better statewide library system. Gillis also sought to use his growing influence to monitor and promote new developments in the state’s libraries. To this end, he implemented a legal requirement that each public library send a copy of its annual report

¹⁷ California State Library, Minutes of the Board of State Library Trustees, March 3, 1906, California History Room, California State Library, Sacramento, California [Hereafter referred to as CSL]; Kunkle, “A Historical Study of the Extension Activities of the California State Library.”

¹⁸ “Circular of Information for Applicants for Certificates of Qualification to Hold the Office of County Librarian in California,” *News Notes of California Libraries*, 6 (April 1911): 151.

¹⁹ Kunkle, “A Historical Study of the Extension Activities of the California State Library”; Debra Gold Hansen, “Professionalizing Library Education: James Gillis, Everett Perry, and Joseph Daniels,” *Library Trends* 52, no. 4 (2004): 963-87.

²⁰ *Dictionary of American Library Biography*, s.v. “Gillis, James Louis,” 198.

to the state library for the archival record.²¹ He then publicized these statewide activities in a new quarterly journal he created, *News Notes of California Libraries*.

To further his goal of professionalization, Gillis established an “Extension Department” within the state library to support for community libraries and their staff. The Extension Department sent state library agents throughout the state to advise local officials on how to manage their public library. These agents also provided training in library methods to small town library staff.²²

Although these state library field agents proved very effective in organizing free city libraries, Gillis was still concerned about how to serve the rural areas that did not have the financial means to support an independent library. The traveling library program had been a good start, but did not fully meet these communities’ information needs. As he explained to the California State Library Board of Trustees in 1908, “These libraries sent from one center, in a state the size of California, could not possibly solve the problem of furnishing adequate library facilities to the residents outside of cities.”²³ He soon came to believe that a statewide county library system was the answer.

²¹ Ibid.

²² California, State Library, “Report of the Trustees..., July 1, 1902-June 30, 1904 (Sacramento, CA: State Printing Office, 1905), 6.

²³ California State Library, “Report of the Trustees..., July 1, 1908-June 30, 1910 (Sacramento, CA: State Printing Office, 1911), 13.

County Library Organizing in California

In his book *Rise of the Public Library in California*, Ray E. Held discusses the origins of county library organizing in California. According to Held, a public library “was a free, locally controlled and tax-supported agency, serving the people of an incorporated municipality... but the creation of an extensive municipal public library structure left the small unincorporated communities and vast rural areas completely untouched.”²⁴ The question, therefore, was how to create a library system that would serve these rural areas throughout the state. Other states were experimenting with county-based library systems at the time, with the first county libraries established in Ohio and Maryland in 1898. Although Held writes that these initial efforts “did not produce a flood of county library activity,” they did provide a model of how to use the county “as the jurisdictional base for extended library service.”²⁵

Gillis began his campaign for county libraries in 1908. His initial step was to have the State Library organize and fund school libraries and then use the school district administrative office to oversee individual school libraries. This provided an example of the centralized branch library system that he envisioned.²⁶ He then developed a general preliminary plan for a county-based library structure which he promoted at professional meetings and in the local press. At the thirty-third annual meeting of the American

²⁴Ray E. Held. *Rise of the Public Library in California* (Chicago: American Library Association), 130.

²⁵Ibid., 132.

²⁶Ibid., 134.

Library Association held in Pasadena in 1911, Gillis took the opportunity to explain the benefits of a county library system to his colleagues.

It must not be understood that municipal libraries do not offer means of coordination with the state library, for the state library supplements in every way any library in the state which asks such assistance. The fact remains, however, that an infinite multiplication of municipal libraries in California would not reach the entire people, nor, acting independently, would they make for that co-ordination which is more and more becoming the accepted slogan of the library world. It was necessary, then, to find some agency by which all the people could be reached, and through which the State Library could become supplemental to the needs of the entire people. That agency has been found in the county free library, which, together with those municipal libraries that prefer to act independently, will cover the entire state area.²⁷

Gillis then explained how a county system functions:

In the counties which are operating county free libraries, the central library at the county seat owns all such books and material as is in usual demand in the county, and can be worn out there. Branches are established in different parts of the county, through which the books reach all the people. Each branch keeps the books only as long as it has use for them. Books desired but not found in the collection are supplied from the central library.²⁸

Gillis touted the benefits of the county system to the California State

Library Board of Trustees as well:

The growth of the county library extension plan promises to relieve in some degree the demand on the State Library for traveling libraries. The county rather than the town as a unit of library activity I believe to be the one on which this branch of our popular educational system will be made effective, for the reason mainly that the county can give better financial

²⁷ James L. Gillis, "Papers and Proceedings of the Thirty-Third Annual Meeting of the American Library Association," *Bulletin of the American Library Association*, 5 (July 1911): 72-75.

²⁸ Ibid.

support. The fact that under the county system the custodian of each deposit station will receive some remuneration for his services will go far toward securing persons of capability to do the work. The distance of the deposit stations from the center of distribution being shorter than in the State system, the books can be exchanged more frequently with less wear, less loss of time and less expense. Better supervision from the headquarters of distribution will be possible, and the borrowers from the deposit stations may more frequently visit the main collection for consultation and selection.²⁹

The first county library system in California was established in Sacramento in 1908 and served as a model for the entire state. Lauren W. Ripley, librarian of the Sacramento Public Library, agreed with Gillis as to the need for library service outside the city limits of Sacramento and used a 1901 municipal library law which allowed the Sacramento City Library to extend services to the county.³⁰ Ripley introduced the new city/county system to his professional colleagues in article that appeared in a 1908 issue of *News Notes of California Libraries*:

Taking advantage of the provision of the general library law of California authorizing such agreements, the Sacramento Public Library and the Board of Supervisors of the County of Sacramento have entered into a compact whereby the library in consideration of the sum of \$3500 for the present year agrees to extend to all residents of Sacramento County the same library privileges as are enjoyed by the city resident. Deposit stations will be maintained at suitable points in the county, each station being supplied with a collection of fifty or more books. A system of weekly exchanges will be arranged between the main library and the stations, the expense of carriage to be paid from the county extension fund.³¹

²⁹ California, State Library, "Report of the Trustees....July 1, 1906-June 30, 1907. (Sacramento, CA: State Printing Office, 1908), p. 11.

³⁰ *California Statutes*, c. 170, sec. 10, (Sacramento, CA: California State Library, 1901), 557.

³¹ Lauren W. Ripley, "County Free Library Extension—The Sacramento Plan," *News Notes of California Libraries*, 3 (October 1908): 303.

The first branch of this new city/county library system was opened at the Elk Grove High School in November 1908. Needing to expand the school's library to secure accreditation, the high school's principal, Harriet G. Eddy, had written to Gillis in October 1908 to request a larger supply of books from the state's traveling library collection. Gillis suggested that Eddy organize a county library branch as part of the fledgling Sacramento County system. Eddy contacted Sacramento librarian Ripley which led Eddy to become the first custodian of the first branch of the Sacramento County Library.³² Eddy was so successful in this new endeavor that in less than a year the branch outgrew its high school location and was moved to the local quarters of the W.C.T.U. By April 1909, the library had over two hundred borrowers and continued to grow. "I shall all my life be proud of that branch...which we had in our country high school," Eddy wrote of her experience, continuing:

The [city] library had the goods. We wanted the goods. The county free library established the connection. That was the whole story, a very simple one. If any of you have ever faced the problem of making bricks without straw, you can appreciate what it means to try to make a first class high school without the laboratory service that a library affords. But we got the service that year. Think of one country high school having over \$2,000 worth of books put on its shelves for use as it needed them throughout the year! Is it any wonder that high schools all over the state, as they hear of this beautiful new plan, are eager for it.³³

State Librarian James Gillis was so impressed with Eddy's initiative at the first county library branch that he persuaded her to join the state library staff to help organize

³² Harriet G. Eddy, "Elk Grove Station of the Sacramento Public Library," *News Notes of California Libraries*, 4 (April 1909), 265.; Kunkle, "A Historical Study of the Extension Activities of the California State Library."

³³ Harriet Eddy, "California County Free Libraries," *Bulletin of the American Library Association*, 5 (July 1911): 138-44.

county libraries throughout California. On September 6, 1909, Harriet Eddy became the first county library organizer, thus beginning a long and successful career at the state library.

In addition to hiring Eddy, Gillis determined that statewide legislation was needed to bring the county library system to fruition. Submitted to and passed by the 38th session of the California Legislature in 1909, Assembly Bill No. 196, “An Act to Provide County Library Systems,” was the first law of its kind framed in California. According to Eddy, the main components of the 1909 County Library Law were:

1. The entire county was made the unit for library service.
2. Any municipality might withdraw if it did not wish to be a part of the system.
3. The county librarian, who was to be certificated, was given large power in carrying on the work.
4. A committee of the county board of supervisors constituted the library board.
5. An alternative or contract plan could be entered into between the supervisors and any library board, by which the library could in return for an appropriation of county money render library service to the entire county.³⁴

Despite his initial success, Gillis had been disappointed with the 1909 county library legislation. As Frederick Wemmer has explained, “Although the law was passed,

³⁴ Ibid.

it had, to Mr. Gillis's distress, undergone a number of amendments on its way through the Legislature which left it much less than he had hoped for. Questions arose regarding a number of its sections and by the early part of 1910 the Attorney General had ruled that except for Section 12, the Section providing for contract service through municipal libraries, the law was defective."³⁵ In addition to making it possible for counties to contract with the existing city libraries for county library service, Section 12 bypassed the need for voters to approve a new tax levy, therefore making it easier to organize a county system.

Undeterred, Gillis and Eddy continued to promote the county library plan under Section 12, while drafting new legislation that would address the current law's deficiencies. By 1910, ten counties had agreed to organize a county library system, including Santa Barbara, San Joaquin, Fresno, Madera, Merced, Tulare, Yolo, Alameda, Kern, and Sacramento.

Despite this initial success, there was "a flood of objections from existing municipal libraries to some major provisions of the county library scheme."³⁶ As Held explains, "The plan threatened the autonomy of the city library, because the area of its service would be usurped by the county. Like any other established interest, the municipal libraries reacted to a threat to their position."³⁷ In her 1969 dissertation on the

³⁵ Frederick Wemmer, "James L. Gillis and the beginning of the California County Library System," *California Librarian* 18, (October 1957): 224-27.

³⁶ Held, *The Rise of the Public Library in California*.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 140.

California State Library, Hannah Kunkle outlines the major objections to the original law:

There were three main objections to the 1909 county library law. One was that it included the territory of the entire county, from which towns desiring not to be included must take active steps to withdraw. A second was that section 3, which provided for the notice of withdrawal of cities and towns, did not sufficiently protect the exempt cities, as it gave the power of entering the system later without election or due notice. The feeling was that any city once in a county free library system might cease to raise a municipal library tax and thus would be passively absorbed by the county library. The third objection was that the county free library was placed under the supervision of three supervisors, making political control possible.³⁸

Responding to these concerns, Gillis revised the county library law in 1911. The new law allowed city libraries to opt out of a county system thus forgoing more taxes and services. The 1911 version further stipulated that if a city opted out, the county would only provide service to the areas not served by the city. The new law also required the county librarian to hold a certificate from grades one, two, or three which needed to be approved by the State Board of Library Examiners. This removed the county librarian from political control and instead based the appointment on the applicant's qualifications. Other important components of the 1911 law included: 1) one county may furnish library service to another by contract; 2) the Board of Supervisors (not a committee thereof) may appoint the county librarian; and 3) the county library is governed by the County Board

³⁸Kunkle, "A Historical Study of the Extension Activities of the California State Library"; "California County Librarians' Convention," *News Notes of California Libraries*, 6 (January 1911): 6.

of Supervisors, but the day-to-day administration was to be handled by the county librarian.³⁹

With many of the original law's objectionable features eliminated, individual counties were now able to create autonomous systems to meet their community's needs. From Los Angeles to San Francisco and beyond, dozens of new county library systems were created between 1911 and 1917. The county systems during this time were so successful that many would remain in existence into the next century mostly unchanged.

Gillis would not have accomplished as much as he did for the county library system in California without the help of his talented and hardworking staff in Sacramento, particularly his county library organizer Harriet Eddy. For nine years, Eddy traveled throughout the state working with local officials to develop county library systems.⁴⁰ She started organizing in Santa Barbara County, San Joaquin County, and other inland central valley counties in 1910, moved down to Los Angeles to organize county libraries there in 1912, and by 1916 was traveling in northern California organizing such counties as Napa and Sonoma. In each county she visited Eddy would seek counsel from all stakeholders. As she explained in her memoir, *County Free Library Organizing in California, 1909-1918*, published by the California Library Association in 1955:

Before you go to a county, inform yourself about county finances, assessed valuation, tax rates, money needed for a county library. As soon as you reach a county, rush like mad to see all the supervisors, preferably

³⁹ Peter Conmy, "James L. Gillis and California Library Legislation," *California Librarian* (October 1957): 229-230. The complete text of the 1911 law can be found in Appendix A.

⁴⁰ Eddy, *County Free Library Organizing in California*.

at home, where they are more comfortable. They must hear the story from you first hand. See the district attorney, the county superintendent of schools, the county clerk and other county officials, even the sheriff, for he travels all over the county. See the editors of the papers, but if possible keep out of print at first, so as to tell the story yourself to the key people. Get the names, addresses, phone numbers of all civic organizations and their officers---women's clubs, Parent-Teachers' Associations, Chambers of Commerce, granges, farmers' unions, ministers, women's church societies, teachers or any other groups that anyone tells you about.⁴¹

Ultimately, Eddy would help create libraries in forty out of the fifty-eight counties in California, bringing library service to some of the most remote areas of the state. In a 1956 speech, UCLA librarian, Lawrence Clark Powell, lauded Eddy as a determined and powerful woman who almost single-handedly created the state's county library system, including the system in Los Angeles County.⁴² She came "barnstorming from Lancaster to Watts, from Claremont to Venice," Powell enthused, "exploding a brilliant idea and a workable plan in the midst of supervisors, mayors, educators, publishers and just plain taxpayers, driving the foundations deep, raising the superstructure high."⁴³ Eddy, however, would find library organizing in Santa Cruz County a particular challenge.

County Library Organizing and the Progressive Movement in Santa Cruz County

During the Progressive Era, Santa Cruz County was influenced by a particular set of factors that would greatly affect its involvement, or lack thereof, in early county library organizing. Chief among these were the county's natural environment, unique economy, demographics, and prevailing localism that existed during this time. Farming

⁴¹ Ibid., 27.

⁴² Lawrence Clark Powell, "One Book in a Million: Harriet Eddy's County Library Organizing in California, 1909-1918," *California State Library Foundation Bulletin*, No. 86, (2007): 19.

⁴³ Ibid.

was paramount in the area at the turn of the century, as was logging and tourism. Santa Cruz County was also home to a thriving film industry, particularly westerns, due to its proximity to southern California, mild climate, and beautiful mountain scenery. In fact, between 1911 and 1919 nearly fifty movies were filmed throughout the county.⁴⁴

Watsonville's economy was also predominately agricultural. The site of a prosperous apple-growing industry, Watsonville was dubbed "Apple City" because of the numerous apple orchards in the area. By 1901 Watsonville had an estimated 156,000 apple trees on 1,780 acres. Nine years later there were one million trees covering 14,000 acres.⁴⁵ The apple industry also spawned a very successful packing and shipping industry which was supported by Watsonville's second oldest company, Martinelli's Sparkling Apple Cider.

The county's limited economic base seriously affected early library organizing. According to State library agent Arlene Hope, "The seasonal nature of its two major occupations, agriculture and the tourist trade," made it difficult for the county to secure a steady flow of revenue.⁴⁶ This situation was exacerbated by the fact that during the Progressive Era community leaders sought to preserve the character and natural beauty of the area and discouraged development of other large industries.⁴⁷ This unsteady employment rate coupled with a lack of other industries forced many young workers to

⁴⁴ Donna Jones, *Santa Cruz County a Century: The Sentinel Takes a Journey through the Past 100 Years* (Santa Cruz, CA: Santa Cruz Sentinel Publishers, 1999).

⁴⁵ Margaret Koch, *Parade of the Past* (Santa Cruz, CA: Valley Publishers, 1973).

⁴⁶ Arlene Hope. *The Santa Cruz Library System: A Study with Recommendations for Action*. (Sacramento: California State Library, 1962), 6.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

move elsewhere for employment. Without a larger and younger work force and a reliable year-round economy, the county was hard pressed to establish a secure tax base to support social services such as a county library.

Another significant barrier to county library organizing was the county's geography and the dispersed nature of its communities. With the Pacific Ocean on one side and the Santa Cruz Mountains on the other, and with no major roads connecting Santa Cruz communities, the county's towns and rural areas were not only isolated from each other they were also cut off from major urban areas such as San José and San Francisco. The county's only cities in the early 1900s were Santa Cruz and Watsonville. They had the infrastructure and financial means to support independent libraries, while the more rural areas did not. The challenge for the county government was to find the means to reach out to these rural areas to provide library service for all citizens.⁴⁸

Another limiting factor in library development in the early 1900s was the fact that Santa Cruz County had only a fledgling educational system with no major universities. While other urban centers in the state were able to use their local schools and colleges to augment city/county library services, Santa Cruz was not able to take advantage of the same resource, further adding to the difficulty of building a county library system.⁴⁹

One final challenge for Santa Cruz County in its development of a county library system was its ingrained localism and suspicion of monopolies in both business and government.⁵⁰ Local officials and residents alike feared that the state library was

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Richardson, "Harriet G. Eddy (1876-1966)."

becoming a statewide monopoly that threatened local library institutions. Many librarians also viewed Gillis and the state library as a “tremendous political machine,” to quote Riverside librarian Joseph Daniels, with ambitions to “subsume municipal libraries within the expanding county library system.”⁵¹ Not only did Santa Cruz officials fear a loss of individuality and local control of their libraries, they did not like the idea of increased tax rates or levies.⁵² Local leaders, particularly in Watsonville, were also wary of excessive pay rates for county librarians and the higher profile that county librarians carried by the sheer weight of their position.⁵³ Finally, the perception of state library organizers such as Harriet Eddy as being outsiders limited the county’s enthusiasm for the proposed county library system.⁵⁴

Despite their relative isolation and suspicion of outside government agencies, Santa Cruz County residents were a “spirited”, “energetic” group, to quote the Santa Cruz *Sentinel*, and “inspired” by the contemporary Progressive movement.⁵⁵ One of the first manifestations of Santa Cruz’s Progressive spirit was its growing concern for the natural environment, particularly in light of the damage done to the local forests by the logging industry. Santa Cruz residents valued their surroundings and sought to protect its natural beauty and resources, particularly the area’s beaches and redwoods. On May 15, 1900, a committee spearheaded by Santa Cruz Board of Trade member, Andrew Hill, was formed

⁵¹Hansen, “Professionalizing Library Education.” 977.

⁵²“Can’t Spare the Money,” *Santa Cruz Evening News*, October 4, 1909.

⁵³“That County Library,” *The Evening Pajaronian*, September 29, 1909.

⁵⁴Eddy, *County Free Library Organizing in California*, 7-9.; Richardson, “Harriet G. Eddy (1876-1966).

⁵⁵Jones, *Santa Cruz County*, 7.

to explore the possibility of saving a large portion of the north county redwoods. The committee was comprised of some of the most influential citizens in the area, including H. L. Middleton who represented the lumber company with holdings throughout the Big Basin area. Shortly thereafter, the committee was transformed into the local Sempervirens Club and-with the assistance of Andrew Hill, it convinced both the public and the legislature that Big Basin should be preserved as a public park. Charles W. Reed was elected president of the Sempervirens Club, and he drafted legislation to appropriate \$500,000 to purchase the land where the redwoods were situated. As local historians Jennie and Denzil Varardo explain, “The bill was introduced by San Francisco Assemblyman George H. Fisk, and Hill traveled to Sacramento to convince not only the legislature but also a reluctant governor. On March 16, 1901, Governor Henry T. Gage signed the legislation which gave California its first state park.”⁵⁶ As result of this early reform effort, in 1902 the county set aside 2,500 acres in the Santa Cruz Mountains as a protected area. Today this reserve is known as Big Basin State Park.

According to the local *Sentinel* newspaper Progressivism also “fueled the growth of civic improvement organizations.”⁵⁷ A good example of this civic activism was the Seabright Improvement Society, established on the eastside of the City of Santa Cruz in 1904. The society purchased and operated a community hall, built a footbridge across the San Lorenzo River, established an independent library, and installed street lights. Over the next few years, the Seabright Improvement Society accomplished other

⁵⁶ Jennie Dennis Verardo and Denzil Verardo, *Restless Paradise: Santa Cruz County, An Illustrated History* (Northridge CA: Windsor Publications Inc., 1987), 29.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

improvements in the neighborhood, including new sewage service with lines connecting with Santa Cruz and a domestic science class at the local Branciforte School. The organization capped off its civic pride by winning first prize for its float, “The Campfire” (which included a real camp fire) in the first Santa Cruz Venetian Water Carnival held in 1908.

The City of Santa Cruz was benefited by other Progressive organizations during the early 1900s. The Santa Cruz Improvement Club, for example, spearheaded a number of important civic projects. According to a 1907 report in the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, the club sponsored “two street cleaning days,” Cliff Drive was “re-planted”, and another “unsightly piece of ground” was “transformed into a park.” The club also placed benches throughout the city as well as removed “unsightly fences and signboards.”⁵⁸ The Saturday Afternoon Club also added to the social improvement fervor that existed in Santa Cruz at the time. In a 1911 interview with the *Sentinel*, President Mrs. F. W. Swanton outlined her club’s many activities. According to Swanton, the club offered women an opportunity for “studies in music, history, literature and the promotion along civic lines of the material and intellectual advancement of her home city.” For the women looking for entertainment, the president continued, “No other organization in our whole State pays out as much money as does the Saturday Afternoon Club to secure the

⁵⁸ “Santa Cruz Improvement Society Elects Officers” *Santa Cruz Sentinel* August 15, 1907.

best, the noblest there is in music, literature and the drama, and the teachings on subjects scientific, artistic and of historical research.”⁵⁹

Watsonville also had an active citizenry during the Progressive Era. An early example of this was the Butterfly Social Club which had been organized in 1879 for young women in the community. Among the club’s main objectives was the overall betterment of the town, and one of its first projects was to fundraise for a fountain in the plaza. The young women were successful, and in 1880 they formally presented a new fountain to the city.⁶⁰ The local chapter of the Native Daughters of the Golden West was also involved in helping Watsonville progress. Its members inaugurated the Plaza Improvement Society to advocate for improving the center of the town for both residents and visitors alike. In one project, the society helped fund the purchase of 800 loads of sand from the Pajaro River to raise the plaza area to street level. The women’s group also provided city benches, helped coordinate Fourth of July events, and collected donations for the piping of the plaza to water its plants.⁶¹

Another successful community venture in Watsonville was the Apple Annual. The apple industry was booming in the early 1900s, so in 1908, the President of the Watsonville Board of Trade, E. A. Hall, presented the idea to the Board of Aldermen of sponsoring a festival similar to one held annually in Oregon. The Watsonville Apple Annual Association was formed in 1909, and its Board of Directors selected noted

⁵⁹ “Saturday Afternoon Club—Mrs. Swanton Interviewed,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, October 1, 1911.

⁶⁰ Betty Lewis, *Watsonville: Memories that Linger* (Fresno: Valley Publishers, 1976), 50.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

architect and local resident, William H. Weeks, to design the Apple Annual building and pavilion. Held from 1910 to 1914, this festival was an enormous success, commanding upwards 40,000 attendees. The festival was short lived, however, moving to San Francisco in 1914 to become part of the Pan American International Exposition.⁶²

Conclusion

In summary, a few major themes can be seen regarding the history of Santa Cruz County during the Progressive Era and their impact on county library organizing. First and foremost, the Progressive Movement mobilized the general public and government officials to improve the local infrastructure and develop a number of public services and institutions, including local libraries. The Progressive Era was also a critical time for women to enter into public life and become involved in numerous civic projects and reforms. Eventually some women found employment in the organizations they helped establish, most notably city and county libraries. Indeed, although State Librarian James Gillis had the vision and political power to create the state's county library system, it took the State Library's women library organizers as well as women librarians and activists in the local community to make it happen.

However, there were many obstacles to be overcome before the Santa Cruz County Library System was established. Individual communities, Watsonville in particular, were protective of their local interests, concerned about increased taxes, and questioned the motives of leaders in Sacramento regarding the ultimate control over the county library system. The next chapters will consider these challenges and how they

⁶² Ibid., 177.

shaped the Santa Cruz County Library System's organizing and development in the years to come.

Chapter 2

Early Libraries in Santa Cruz County and the Establishment of the Santa Cruz County Library System

Santa Cruz County has enjoyed a rich and vibrant library history. Starting in the late 1860s with the formation of the county's first reading room, city residents, local officials, and businesspeople were very interested in the pursuit of free public libraries and what they could offer the community.¹ It was this early momentum that led to a greater question of how city library service could be expanded to reach the rural and out-of-way townships throughout the county. The California State Library Trustees, in their 1918-1920 Biennial Report, gave voice to this Progressive thinking in regards to universal library service: "In California, city, county and state libraries form links in a chain of service through which the book needs of the people are met equitably, economically and efficiently. The hermit library in this state is an extinct species."²

Between 1880 and 1916, Santa Cruz County librarians and officials took this Progressive philosophy to heart and endeavored to develop a countywide library system to bring equitable service to all. The county's first public library was established in Santa Cruz in 1881, and it moved into a Carnegie-funded building in 1904. The Santa Cruz Public Library (SCPL) started branches in Seabright and Garfield Park as well. Other towns in the county, such as Watsonville and Boulder Creek, created their own

¹Margaret Souza, "The History of the Santa Cruz Public Library System" (master's thesis, San Jose State University, 1970).

²California State Library. *Biennial Report of the Trustees of the California State Library...1918-1920* (Sacramento, CA: J.M. Cremin...Supt of State Printing, 1920), 24.

public libraries, while still other communities negotiated individual contracts with the county to provide library service. Finally in 1916, after much public debate, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors inaugurated a formal county library program, contracting with the Santa Cruz Public Library to administer it. Santa Cruz librarian, Minerva Waterman, would serve as the first county librarian.

The Progressive Era had a strong influence on this early history of Santa Cruz libraries, particularly the role played by women in their early development. As with other communities in California, women in Santa Cruz formed very active community groups, such as the Saturday Women's Club, Native Daughters of the Golden West, Women's Christian Temperance Union, and the Parent Teacher Association. These newly energized women were responsible for much of the early organizing of reading rooms and libraries in the area.³ However, unlike other counties in the state, while women's groups established many of the outlying branch libraries, the Santa Cruz Public Library was almost exclusively organized by men.

Santa Cruz's library history was influenced by several additional factors. First was the influential role played by Minerva Waterman, city and county librarian for over fifty years. Another interesting feature of Santa Cruz library organizing was the fact that although the county did not officially establish a county library system until 1916, the

³See, for example, Santa Cruz Women's Club Records, 1907-1982. MS 75. Santa Cruz Public Library Special Collections and Archives, Santa Cruz, CA. Hereafter cited as SCPL.

board of supervisors did authorize and partially fund county library “branches” prior to that date. Despite these unusual characteristics, Santa Cruz County’s library history between 1880 and 1930 provides a telling example of how the state’s county library movement progressed and the complexities of establishing a countywide library system among a group of independent cities. Lastly, one of the major and lasting distinguishing features of the county system was the omission of the Watsonville Public Library from its ranks.

Early Santa Cruz City Reading Rooms and Libraries

The county’s library movement began in 1868 when a group of thirty-five men convened to form the Santa Cruz Library Association. The association’s first meeting took place on June 15, 1868,⁴ at which C. L. Anderson served as chairman and Frank Cooper secretary. Those in attendance elected seven others to form a board of trustees for the new association. The association’s first board represented the city’s educated, professional class, men who were very active in local government and public life. Board President C. L. Anderson, for example, moved to Santa Cruz in 1867 to practice medicine. He served as a school trustee for seven years, later a trustee of the Free Public Library, and president of the City Board of Health. He was also an amateur naturalist as well as a United States Examining Surgeon for Pensions. Vice President Lucien Heath was the first secretary of state of Oregon before moving to Santa Cruz in 1866. He was the president of the Santa Cruz County Bank, and twice elected to the California State

⁴ Santa Cruz Library Association, Meeting Minutes, 1868. SCPL. Signature agreements are in front of the first book of minutes.

Assembly. Treasurer Paul Pioda was a professor and a “gentleman of refined tastes and of superior education.”⁵ He arrived in Santa Cruz in 1867, started a young ladies seminary, and later became a mining superintendent on Gold Hill. In addition, Pioda taught modern languages at University of California, Berkeley. Corresponding Secretary Walter Frear was pastor at the Santa Cruz Congregational Church, and Recording Secretary Albert Hagan was a county judge during this time.⁶

Although the Santa Cruz Library Association had no space nor books, general storeowner and County Treasurer Frank Cooper was appointed the first librarian. Members of the association, including U.S. Senator Cornelius Cole, donated the first books which consisted of public documents and reference materials. Making room for the books in his store, Cooper opened the library to association members in 1870, who paid six dollars a year for library privileges. Shortly thereafter, John Brazer, a college-educated man, opened a bookstore in the Rhodes Building, and in 1871 the Santa Cruz Library Association moved its books to Brazer’s bookstore and Brazer assumed the role of librarian. Brazer resigned his position in 1871 to become the postmaster at which point Edwin Shepard was elected librarian on January 4, 1871. The library was moved to two upstairs rooms in the Anthony Block on the corner of Mission and Water Streets. The library moved again the following year to A. J. Hinds bookstore located on Pacific Avenue. Hinds became librarian at this point, and lowered association membership fees to four dollars a year. The library would also move to the Sentinel building where little

⁵“Prof. Paul Pioda,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, October 6, 1892.

⁶Biographical information gathered from the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, 1920-1950.

growth occurred. The Santa Cruz Library Association collection ultimately grew to three thousand volumes before it was donated to the City of Santa Cruz in 1881.⁷

During this early library movement in Santa Cruz, a number of other improvement societies either created readings rooms or donated volumes to the library association for its members and the community. The Independent Order of Oddfellows (IOOF)⁸ for instance, supported a reading room for its members and would ultimately sell its small collection to the city in support of creating a true central library.⁹ In 1884, the Santa Cruz Farmers' Club donated its private collection of books to the new Santa Cruz city library, helping to consolidate the early library movement into one public institution.

Local women's clubs contributed to the city's early library movement as well. In November 1874, the women of Santa Cruz's temperance union organized a reading room in the Anthony Block. Sustained by subscription, the reading room was established for the reading of periodicals and both the room and papers were free to all.¹⁰ Two years later, the growing library and reading room moved into two upstairs rooms of the

⁷"Looking Backward over Library Life in Santa Cruz," *Santa Cruz Surf*, September 28, 1903; Dr. C. L. Anderson, "Semi-Centennial of the Public Library: Sketch of the Early Days of the Institution, Written by Dr. C. L. Anderson in '99, *Santa Cruz Surf*, (June 6, 1918).

⁸The Independent Order of Odd Fellows began in 18th Century England, it was deemed odd to find people organized for the purpose of giving aid to those in need without recognition and pursuing projects for the benefits of all mankind, hence the name Odd Fellows. One major tenant of the organization is to help make the world a better place to live by aiding each other in times of need and by organizing charitable projects and activities that would benefit the less fortunate, the youth, the elderly, the environment and the community in every way possible.

⁹Souza, "History of the Santa Cruz Public Library System," 10.

¹⁰"The City Library," *The Santa Cruz Sentinel*, February 6, 1885.

Whidden Building. Mrs. E. A. De Wolfe became librarian for twenty-five dollars per month. In 1881, the WCTU library moved again to the top floor of the Mission Hill School, and later that year it, like other reading room collections in the city, the books were given to the City of Santa Cruz for its fledgling public library.¹¹

During the 1870s, then, Santa Cruz residents expressed an increasing interest in books and reading, establishing a series of social libraries to meet the community's needs. This early library movement culminated in the establishment of the first city library in 1881, which absorbed the books of its precursors. In December 1881, the Santa Cruz Library Association reconstituted itself as the Santa Cruz Free Library and authorized the board to make arrangements with the city to assume responsibility:

Resolved, that the trustees of Santa Cruz free library be and are hereby instructed and authorized to make all necessary arrangements with the municipal authorities of the city of Santa Cruz by which the Santa Cruz library shall be transferred to the said city, to be managed, owned and protected for the public use in accordance with an act to establish free public libraries and reading rooms, passed by the legislature of the State of California and approved April 26, 1880.¹²

The first Board of Trustees were elected and included A. A. Taylor, D. Tuthill, A. J. Hinds, Robert Effey, and George W. Place. On October 2, 1882, the tax to support the library was set at five cents on each one hundred dollars of assessment.

In its first few years of operation, the public library moved frequently in search of suitable accommodation. In 1882, the SCPL was initially housed in two rooms on the

¹¹ Santa Cruz Library Association, Meeting Minutes, December 15, 1881, SCPL. See also, "Semi-Centennial of the Public Library," *Santa Cruz Surf*, June 6, 1918.

¹² "Semi-Centennial of the Public Library," *Santa Cruz Surf*, June 6, 1918.

first floor of City Hall, which soon proved too small for the growing collection. In 1894, the library moved into the Hotaling Building, later known as the St. George Hotel, on Pacific Avenue. Then, in early 1900, the library moved into the Williamson and Garrett Building, where it remained until a permanent structure could be built.

The first mention of building a free-standing library building appeared in the October 3, 1899, Santa Cruz library board meeting minutes.¹³ At this meeting, library trustees formed a committee to secure funding from the Carnegie Corporation, and board member, Samuel Leask Sr., was appointed committee chair. Leask was a prominent businessman who, with his partner John Johnston, opened the general Seaside Store which later was incorporated into the very successful Leask General Department Store. Leask was also very involved in civic life and served as a member of the local World War I Extension Board; the California Lay Commission for the study of educational problems; and a western zone committee for the achievement of unemployment problems and insurance principles. Other committee members were former Library Association President, Dr. C. L. Anderson; Dr. F. W. Bliss, an early local dentist; and F. A. Hihn, Santa Cruz's first millionaire who made his riches from the Gold Rush. Indeed, Hihn was the county's most influential pioneer, owning the most land and paying more taxes than anyone else in the county.¹⁴

There was no further mention in any public records regarding a permanent library building until March 1901 when a short comment appeared in the *Sentinel* stating that

¹³ Santa Cruz Library Board of Trustees, Meeting Minutes, October 3, 1899, p. 150. SCPL.

¹⁴ Biographical information found in the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, 1920-1950.

Mr. Carnegie had received Santa Cruz's application and that the city was waiting for a response.¹⁵

The Carnegie Corporation's response arrived in January 1902, asking Dr. C. L. Anderson to complete an official form with stipulations for the possibility of receiving any funds. By January 5, 1902 the form was completed and on its way to Carnegie. Santa Cruz citizens and committee members were hoping for at least \$25,000 and upwards of \$50,000 based on the population and size of Santa Cruz. On February 15, 1902, the Carnegie Corporation approved an initial sum of \$15,000. The funding was met with disappointment from board members and the city council as they felt that a minimum of \$20,000 was necessary to complete the building. Committee member Leask traveled to New York at his own expense to plead their case with Carnegie's private secretary James Bertram and ask for the necessary \$20,000. After some consideration, the Carnegie Corporation agreed to this additional amount. In return, the city was expected to pay \$1500 annually for the library's maintenance as well purchase the land for the new building.¹⁶

At a joint meeting held on November 25, 1902, the Santa Cruz City Council and the Library Board of Trustees discussed the design of their Carnegie library.¹⁷ They envisioned a one-story building with a basement that could be used as a lecture hall and reading room. The main floor should contain enough room for 30,000 volumes as well as

¹⁵ *Santa Cruz Evening Sentinel* (March 27, 1901).

¹⁶ Editorial, *Santa Cruz Sentinel* (February 16, 1902); Robert Burton and Thomas L. Mchugh, "Samuel Leask; Transplanted Scot Citizen par Excellence, (The Village Print Shop: Felton, CA, 1964): 4.

¹⁷ "Carnegie Library Plans Submitted," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, November 26, 1902.

adult and children's reading rooms and space for a committee meeting room. The building was to face westward, be visible from all sides, and, ideally, overlook a garden or open space. The city hired famed Watsonville architect William Weeks to design the Romanesque-style building, which was completed in 1904.¹⁸ Located on the corner of Church and Center Streets, the beautiful new library had two floors and a total of 9,000 square feet. The book collection was approximately 14,000 volumes and served around 15,000 residents.

Minerva Waterman, librarian during the SCPL's formative years, has been credited with developing the new library into the thriving civic institution. As the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* wrote in an article commemorating Waterman's retirement in 1940, "The vision, the initiative, the aggressive energy, the constant push, have in the main come from Miss Waterman, and to her goes the credit for whatever measure of good work has been done."¹⁹ Waterman was born on November 21, 1868, in Santa Cruz. Her father

¹⁸ Prolific architect, William Henry Weeks, left a lasting impression on the face of Santa Cruz, Watsonville, and much of California. Weeks was born on January 18, 1864, in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada. Son of a contractor-builder, Weeks and his family moved to Watsonville in 1892. His affiliation with the Christian Church in Oakland brought him to Watsonville to design a new church. Gaining a reputation in Watsonville, Weeks was soon designing homes as well as commercial and public buildings in Hollister, Palo Alto, San Francisco, Monterey, Pacific Grove, Gilroy, San Jose, and Santa Cruz. His architectural style included: Gothic, Moorish, Victorian, Spanish, California Bungalow, Mission and Colonial. A partial list of buildings designed by Weeks in Santa Cruz includes the Carnegie Library, All Saint's Church, Big Trees Hotel, Casino, Santa Cruz High School, Hotel Palomar, Leask Store and Fred Swanton's residence. Betty Lewis, *Watsonville: Memories That Linger*, vol. 1 (Santa Cruz, CA: Valley Publishers, 1980.)

¹⁹ "Minerva Waterman Looks Back on 50 Years in City Library," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, June 6, 1940.

worked for the Powder Works of Santa Cruz and her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, also lived in Santa Cruz.

Waterman was working as a rural schoolteacher outside of Santa Cruz in the late 1880s, but was called home in 1889 to help care for her ailing father. She secured an assistant librarian position so she could stay in Santa Cruz while continuing his care. The assistant librarian job was a temporary measure for Waterman, but, a year later, she accepted a permanent position as head librarian for the Santa Cruz Library.²⁰ Since there was no standardized method of cataloging books at the time, Waterman's first priority as head librarian was to catalog the collection, and she did so by handwriting each entry. Besides adding the title and author to each cataloging record, she also annotated many entries based on her own reading.

During her administration, Waterman also garnered significant support from the Santa Cruz community, which helped bridge the gap between the library's modest budget and the ambitious projects she envisioned. For example, Waterman organized many fundraisers on the library's behalf, such as in 1917 when Waterman, Librarian Tillie Doeltz, patron Bessie Patton, and trustee B. B. Snyder organized a book drive for local soldiers. Waterman also secured a donation in 1929 from local radio dealer Herbert Coates—a radio receiving set so that library patrons could listen to Herbert Hoover's inauguration ceremony in Washington. During her long career at SCPL, Waterman also procured a number of special collections from prominent residents. These included the

²⁰ Santa Cruz Library Board of Trustees, Meeting Minutes, March 1, 1889, p. 69. SCPL.

Laura Hecox collection of marine and other specimens, which ultimately formed the nucleus of the City Museum.²¹ The Edward Leedham music collection was donated in 1937 and a collection of more modern music from Dr. Charles Hadden Parker was also donated in 1937. Under Waterman's leadership, the library sponsored numerous lectures and art exhibits which numbered as many as 450 meetings and events a year.

Waterman's crowning achievement was negotiating the donation of the Otto Kunitz Music Library in 1937, which led to the establishment of a new Art and Music Room for the library.²²

Minerva Waterman had another accomplishment with more direct bearing on the development of the Santa Cruz County library system: the establishment of two library branches. The city's first branch was set up in the Seabright district in 1907. According to Minerva Waterman in her June 1907 report to the board, "For the past three years we have received most urgent requests to establish a branch library of Seabright for the months of July, August and September."²³ The library branch had much support from local residents, the city mayor, and the Seabright Improvement Society, as well as Fred Swanton who donated the tent structure while Miss Sarah A. Tyrell donated books.²⁴

²¹ "Minerva Waterman Looks Back on 50 Years of Service" *The Santa Cruz Sentinel*, June 6, 1940.

²² In a June 1940 editorial by the *Sentinel* congratulating Minerva Waterman for 50 years of service, the editor also states that the Kunitz Music Library, catalogued by Miss Anna Bailey, was probably the best music collection in any city the size of Santa Cruz in the entire state; See "Minerva Waterman Looks Back on 50 Years of Service" *The Santa Cruz Sentinel*, June 6, 1940.

²³ Minerva Waterman, Monthly Report to the Board of Trustees, June, 1907.SCPL.

²⁴ *Santa Cruz Surf*, September 23, 1907; Souza, "History of the Santa Cruz Public Library."

Under the direction of librarian Emma Bond, the new branch library was located in a tent-house in Tent City on Seabright Avenue at the corner where the electric cars turned from Seabright to Twin Lakes. It was open to the public on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. The library's collection consisted of 200 books and 20 magazines, and during its first year of operation its 117 card holders checked out over 1,400 books.²⁵ By 1915, the library's collection consisted of 958 volumes and over 3897 items circulated.

The Santa Cruz Public Library created a second branch in Garfield Park in 1909. Garfield Park residents, the Cliff Improvement Society and the Garfield Park Improvement Club were all involved in bringing about a library in the area. Initially the Garfield Park branch was located in a room adjacent to the fire station, but the following year it moved to rooms in a church-owned "Rest Cottage" located in Errett Circle. The library was managed by Tillie E. Doeltz, born in Santa Cruz and attended the local high school. Doeltz took special training in library work at the University of California. She was appointed the first assistant librarian by the board of trustees for the Santa Cruz Library in 1903 when the library was housed in the Williamson and Garrett building on Pacific Avenue. Doeltz worked at Garfield Park for a short time and worked most of her career on the desk in the Carnegie library. In 1921 she was put in charge of the library's county schools department.²⁶ The earliest statistics available are from 1911 which show that the branch had 350 volumes, 108 cardholders, with a total of 847 items circulating

²⁵ *News Notes of California Libraries*. 3 (1907): 182.

²⁶ "Tillie Doeltz Ex-Librarian Dies in Reno," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, April 4, 1957.

that year. By 1915, the library had 643 books and 22 periodicals, and circulation had risen to 2351 items.²⁷

The city's two initial branches in Seabright and Garfield Park proved so successful that the city applied for a second Carnegie grant to erect permanent buildings in these locations. Awarded two \$3,000 grants by the Carnegie Corporation in November 1913, the city once again hired architect W. H. Weeks to design the buildings. Both libraries were classical revival in style and officially opened in 1915. The Seabright Carnegie library was housed under a steep gable roof and was extended with additions behind and below on its steeply sloping site. With its stucco gable roof, the Garfield Park Library, according to "Carnegie Libraries of California" website, "is compatible with the surrounding homes, but the Classic elements of the entrance, the window treatment, and the parklike grounds, convey its public purpose. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1992."²⁸

Early Boulder Creek Reading Rooms and Libraries

Santa Cruz was not the only city with an active and successful library movement during the Progressive Era. Reform-minded residents of Boulder Creek were also committed to developing a library for their community. The city's first reading room was organized by the local chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in the late 1800s.²⁹ It later became a city library and would then become a county branch. As such,

²⁷ Minerva Waterman, Report the Board of Library Trustees, July 1915. SCPL.

²⁸ Carnegie Libraries of California www.carnegie-libraries.org.

²⁹ According to their website: www.wctu.org/earlyhistory.html the Women's Christian Temperance Union was focused on town improvement as well as very interested in family values, virtuous pursuits, and education. The WCTU was also

it serves as an early example of an existing city library forgoing its independence (or in this instance losing its independence) to become part of the county library system in 1917.

The Women's Christian Temperance Union helped the Boulder Creek library get its start in 1897.³⁰ Built by Boulder Creek residents, the reading rooms "were a handsome two story building dedicated by the Rev. S. E. Crowe, financial agent, in 1894. The downstairs rooms were devoted to the WCTU parlor and library, which was filled with books from generous friends. Upstairs room were reserved for the librarian...whomever she might be and her family."³¹ During the next six years, 178 books and many magazines were added. Mr. A. P. Hotaling donated many books to the Santa Cruz Public Library in 1898 and all duplicates were sent to Boulder Creek. In 1903, after the establishment of the State Circulating Library, the Boulder Creek reading room obtained books from the California State Library as well.

Building on the success of the WTCU reading room, in 1906 a petition was circulated among the townspeople requesting the establishment of a city library. Signed by 112 residents, the petition was presented to the town trustees and later forwarded to the County Board of Supervisors.³² According to the Rogers Free Library Act of 1878, incorporated municipal governments were allowed to maintain a library at no more than

involved in a number of social reform issues, including labor, prostitution, public health, sanitation, and international peace. As the movement grew in numbers and strength, members of the WCTU also focused on suffrage. The WCTU's work extended across a range of efforts to bring about personal and social moral reform.

³⁰ Souza, "History of the Santa Cruz Public Library System.

³¹ "Boulder Creek WCTU," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, June 28, 1959.

³² Souza, History of the Santa Cruz Public Library.

one mill on the dollar. The law also stipulated that one fourth of the electors must compel the city council or town trustees by petition to establish a library.³³ Responding to the public's appeal, in August 1906 the city government passed town ordinances No. 49 and No. 52, which established a free library and provided for a tax levy for its ongoing support.

The Boulder Creek Library initially remained in the original WTCU reading room, which the women's group provided rent-free for three years. With an operating budget of \$280 from taxation, the library had one paid employee, Jeannett Stagg. She would be replaced by Martha Fritch in 1913. Initially the library contained 468 volumes, had 112 registered cardholders, and was open every day from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. and evenings.³⁴ The number of items circulated during July, August and September 1908 equaled 554. By 1915 total volumes stood at 993 and included 150 registered borrowers. Circulation for a third of the year in 1914 stood at 826.³⁵ These were the only available circulation statistics reported by the library to the state.

Unfortunately, the town of Boulder Creek was dis-incorporated by local voters in 1915 which left the library without a formal support system. The library's bills were turned over to the county, and volunteers H. C. Middleton and Fred Moody took care of the books still housed in the WCTU's reading room. At the time, the County of Santa Cruz was contracting with individual cities to provide library services (a topic discussed later in this chapter). However, for reasons not revealed in the historical record, the

³³ Held, *The Rise of the Public Library in California*, 59.

³⁴ *News Notes of California Libraries*, 1 (May-December 1907): 308.

³⁵ *News Notes of California Libraries*, 9 (January-October 1914): 358.

County Board of Supervisors did not immediately approve a library services contract for Boulder Creek. Essentially, there was no branch in Boulder Creek in 1915 or 1916. In fact, the county supervisors would not make the Boulder Creek Library a branch of the county library system until March 1917.

In response to the county's reluctance to provide financial support, Boulder Creek community members publicly urged the board to take action to save their library. An editorial published in the local newspaper, the *Sentinel*, in September 1915 stated the importance and need for a library. The Boulder Creek Parent Teacher's Association also sent a letter to the board, in which they declared that the library was a moral, social and intellectual benefit to the community.³⁶ This sentiment was shared by other community members, as evidenced by the handwritten petitions also submitted to the board.³⁷ A typed letter that accompanied one petition, signed by thirty residents, states their reasons for continued support from the county:

Gentlemen, at a recent meeting of the Trustees of the Boulder Creek Public Library, it was decided to petition to the Board of Supervisors for financial aid in maintaining the public library at Boulder Creek. The reasons for this may be set forth as follows:

1. The library provides books and other reading material for many residents of the county outside of the city.
2. Summer visitors from the adjoining country and nearby towns secure much reading matter from this library.
3. In the interest of education and in a desire to welcome summer visitors to the San Lorenzo Valley, this library does not charge for library privileges when used by outsiders.

³⁶ Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors. Meeting Minutes, October 2, 1916. Special Collections and Archives, University of California at Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA. Hereafter cited as Special Collections, UCSC.

³⁷ Edee Perkins, Handwritten Petitions, April 1913. Santa Cruz County Records, Santa Cruz, CA. Hereafter cited as SCCBS, County Records.

4. The assessed valuation of our city is at \$175,000 and the rate allowed for library purposes is 15% making about \$260 available for the maintenance of the library.

5. Our allowance does not permit us to purchase new books nor replace those that are worn out.

In view of the above, we respectfully ask your Board to assist us in providing books and other reading material for the residents and visitors of this part of the valley, thereby providing for their information and entertainment.

Respectfully submitted,
Boulder Creek Library.³⁸

The events in Boulder Creek provide a good example of how local communities were in favor of county branches despite the misgivings and trepidation of county officials. There were many details to work through and the elected officials throughout the county had to grapple with them which might explain their misgivings. But county officials could not ignore the action taken and words spoken by many community members on behalf of countywide library service, as will be explored in more detail below.

Harriet Eddy's Visit to Santa Cruz in 1909

As discussed in chapter 1, State Librarian James Gillis hired Harriet Eddy in September 1909 to guide county officials in organizing a county library system, and Santa Cruz was among the first counties Eddy visited. As many counties across the state had already embraced the idea of a county library system, Gillis and Eddy were unprepared for the hostile reception they encountered in Santa Cruz, which Eddy

³⁸ Boulder Creek Library, One typed and two handwritten sheets dated April 5, 1913. SCCBS, County Records.

described in her memoir as a “baptism by fire.”³⁹ In fact, before coming to speak to local officials in Santa Cruz, Eddy attended a district meeting of the California Library Association held in Big Basin State Park, located in the mountains in the northern part of Santa Cruz County. Taking place on September 11 and 12, 1909, the meeting’s generally friendly atmosphere led Eddy to believe that Santa Cruz was receptive to county libraries. The convention was well attended by local librarians, including Minerva Waterman, Bessie Herman, and Anna Linscott of Santa Cruz, Tillie Doeltz of Garfield Park, and Irma Cole of Seabright.⁴⁰ According to Eddy, “Everyone present was friendly to the county plan” and supported her planned meeting with Santa Cruz librarian Minerva Waterman, SCPL Board Member Samuel Leask, and a few other “educated” citizens.⁴¹

To Eddy’s chagrin, she soon discovered that in 1909 most county officials and many residents were opposed to county libraries. As she later wrote, “Even Mr. Gillis, as shrewd as he was, and as sensitive to political winds, did not foresee the opposition I should meet because of local jealousies and political antagonisms.”⁴² In her memoir, Eddy explained what happened the day after her initial meeting with the Board of Supervisors:

I was horrified. The morning paper attacked me personally as a part of the “Black Republican gang,” in Sacramento, designing to get control of the state for tax purposes. The “county library machine” was seen as Satan’s own workshop, with Mr. Gillis as head conspirator. Later I was to learn that the attack was purely political, with myself not the innocent bystander but the “goat”. At that time, the tax rate was set in Sacramento to raise

³⁹ Eddy, *County Free Library Organizing in California*.

⁴⁰ *News Notes of California Libraries*, 4 (January-October 1909): 501-02. Anna Linscott, Santa Cruz County Treasurer was also the daughter of J.W. Linscott.

⁴¹ Eddy, *County Free Library Organizing in California*, 7.

⁴² *Ibid.*

funds for state purposes and a big fight was raging all over the state to break down that system. Years later, the same editor went to Sacramento as Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds, and we became good friends.⁴³

The opposition within the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors was led by the board's chair, James A. Linscott, who, according to Samuel Leask, used his political influence to convince others on the board to "definitely and firmly" turn down State Library's county plan.⁴⁴ According to Leask, "No record has been preserved of the sparring which undoubtedly took place between Miss Eddy and the redoubtable diplomat (Linscott) and master politician who was not only chairman of the Board of Supervisors but its most influential member. All that is certainly known is that the County library proposition was definitely and firmly turned down."⁴⁵

An article in the Santa Cruz *Evening News* titled, "Can't spare the money," and with the telling subtitle, "Supervisor Linscott Throws Cold Water on County Library Plan," provided details of the board's decision. "The supervisors gave the county library plan, as proposed by Miss Eddy....rather a cool reception this morning," the newspaper reported. At the meeting, Eddy had "explained that but \$150 per year would be required for each sub-station, the people of the district furnishing the house room and care free of charge." Eddy further "proposed that a contract be made with the city libraries in Santa Cruz and Watsonville for the service." According to the newspaper, Linscott informed Eddy that the board had already fixed its tax levy for that year and no provision had been

⁴³ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁴ Leask Family Papers. 1861-2002. Manuscript 2521-2600. Box 2530, Folder 12. CSL.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

made to collect taxes to support a county library system. Put simply, the county simply could not spare the money⁴⁶

The Seven-Year Conversation: County Branch Organizing, 1909-1916

Ironically, although the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors refused to consider the state library's county library plan in 1909, during the next five years the board agreed to fund several county branch libraries. In fact, on April 1, 1912, the supervisors passed a resolution stating that any unincorporated town or locality in the county that desired a "sub-station" or branch library must petition the board signed by local residents of that township or locality. Titled a "Resolution Providing for the Establishment and Maintenance of a County Free Library for Santa Cruz County," this document demonstrates the board's commitment and support.

WHEREAS, it is fitting and just and for the best interest and welfare of the people of Santa Cruz County, that they be given every proper privilege for education, culture and pleasure, and WHEREAS the establishment of a county free library in Santa Cruz County would offer such means for advancement and improvement and WHEREAS by an act entitled "An act to provide for the establishment and maintenance of county free libraries in the State of California approved on February 25 1911...RESOLVED, that the Board of Supervisors for Santa Cruz County, State of California, exercises its power prescribed in said act, and that Section 16 of said act be put into full force within the County of Santa Cruz, State of California, and be it further, RESOLVED, that the said County of Santa Cruz execute a contract according to said Section 16, with the Board of Library Trustees of the Santa Cruz Public Library, of the City of Santa Cruz, State of California, for the purpose of carrying out the purpose of said act and the intent of this resolution. Passed by the Board of Supervisors this 1st day of April, A.D. 1912.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *Santa Cruz Evening News*. October 4, 1909.

⁴⁷ County of Santa Cruz Records, One typed sheet, SCCBS, County Records.

While the resolution was just that, with a formal contract coming seven years later in 1916, it did show the county's intent to support library development in the rural areas. The county's early branch libraries were established on a case-by-case basis, with each town negotiating a separate contract with the county supervisors. The two most enduring of these pioneering branches were formed in the townships of Ben Lomond and Soquel. Their success prompted other Santa Cruz communities to petition for a library branch, providing additional momentum behind the state library's county library plan.

The Free Public Library of Ben Lomond was established in 1911 by the Ben Lomond Library Association, an offshoot of the Ben Lomond Improvement Society. Dedicated to the general welfare of the community, the Ben Lomond Improvement Society founding members and trustees Benjamin Dickinson, I. B. Hobson, and Elisha Brooks sought to "acquire certain lands and premises situated in the town of Ben Lomond for the purposes of erecting and maintaining thereon a free public library and to convert the lands and premises belonging to and surrounding said library into a public park which shall be subject to the exclusive control of the library trustess."⁴⁸

In September 1912, library association members W. A. Silvey, Benjamin Dickinson, and H. R. Sault submitted a petition to the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors requesting them to authorize a branch library and provide an initial budget of \$300 annually for maintenance. The board approved the contract in March 1913.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ "Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors of Santa Cruz County," *Santa Cruz Sentinel* (March 10, 1911).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 95.

Over the next two years, Ben Lomond community members were involved in the planning and design of the town's new library. Elisha Brooks, a retired professor from San Francisco, donated the land, and residents raised \$770 for the building's construction. All but 40 of the library's 948 books were donated for the library as well. Completed in the middle of November 1913, the formal opening ceremony was held on January 10, 1914. The Ben Lomond library trustees invited the Santa Cruz library trustees to attend the dedication, with SCPL trustee Samuel Leask and Elisha Brooks speaking to the crowd. The *Santa Cruz Surf* reported that "An afternoon, or more correctly speaking, a day of unusual interest and pleasure was enjoyed by the friends who accepted the invitation of the Ben Lomond Improvement Club to be present at the dedication of the new library and club house at Ben Lomond, Saturday January 10." The dedication program consisted of the song

"California," by pupils of the grammar school, Mrs. Lulu Hawes, teacher. Address of welcome, Elisha Brooks. Song, Prof. Browne and three sons, Boulder Creek. Address, S. Leask of Santa Cruz. Song, "The Brownie Boys". Address, Prof. Browne, full of enthusiasm and good words for the work accomplished and the spirit in which everyone had entered into the work, giving money, time and thought. Remarks by W. S. Rodgers and J. G. Wright. Mr. Wright, who is past 80 years of age, took exception to the manner in which the other speakers addressed those present, saying it was his pleasure to address them as "Mr. Chairman and fellow citizens." Mr. Wright's offhand address was one full of deep interest and much appreciation. Another song by the Browne Boys closed the afternoon program.⁵⁰

The report concluded: "When good nights were said people sighed with satisfaction over a happy day, long to be remembered."⁵¹ On October 15, 1916, the Ben

⁵⁰ "Public Library at Ben Lomond," *Santa Cruz Surf* (January 12, 1914).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Lomond Library would become one of the original branches of the new county library system.

The Soquel Improvement Club was the primary driving force behind the establishment of Soquel's branch library. Like many area women's clubs, the Soquel members were motivated to improve the general surroundings in their community. However, their main focus was to bring a library to Soquel. Members who were specifically involved with the library's initial planning and coordinating were Mary Morris, T. Gerwilliger, Nora Angell, Lucille Kaplansky, and John Lemon. In 1901 members and residents asked the Santa Cruz Library if it could donate fifty to one hundred books every other month to the Soquel's Reading Room until the city was able to build its own library. In response, the Santa Cruz Library sent one hundred used books in 1901 and also sent more books to in 1905. In June, 1910, three hundred books once owned and used by the Seabright Library were donated to Soquel's Reading Room as well. Members of the Soquel Improvement Club also met with Harriet Eddy during her visit to the Santa Cruz area in 1909. At their meeting, Eddy apprised the women of the state library's legislative actions. She also advised club members to petition the County Board of Supervisors and the Santa Cruz Library Board of Trustees to secure their cooperation in forming a county library branch.⁵²

⁵² Soquel Improvement Club, Meeting Minutes, September 24, 1909, p. 124. SCPL.

Based on Eddy's advice, various Soquel organizations and citizen's groups began a petition campaign urging the County Board of Supervisors to support a branch library in their community.

One of the first petitions came from the Soquel Grange, whose members agreed upon the following resolution: "Resolved that it is the sense of this Grange that the establishment of the county library system would be a great benefit to this community and that the Soquel Grange petitions the Hon. Board of Supervisors to appropriate a sum of money to establish this system."⁵³ Accordingly, on September 29, 1909, Soquel Grange Secretary, J. R. Morrison, sent a letter to the Board of Supervisors urging them to approve a county branch in Soquel. In an undated letter around the same time, the Soquel School District similarly petitioned the Board of Supervisors. "We the undersigned of the Soquel School," the petition began "are most heartily in favor of a branch library for our town. We believe it would be a wonderful benefit to us in our work and a great convenience to all the people of Soquel as well. We thank you in advance for anything you might do in supporting this worthy cause."⁵⁴ The petition from Soquel School included more than sixty signatures from area residents and school staff.

In early 1911 Soquel community members asked the County Board of Supervisors for financial assistance which resulted in a \$100 check written by Mr. Senon towards the general library fund.⁵⁵ The Soquel Improvement Club submitted a second

⁵³ Santa Cruz County Records, Letter from Secretary J. R. Morrison to Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors, September 29, 1909. SCCBS, County Records.

⁵⁴ Santa Cruz County Records, Letter from Soquel School and supporters to County Supervisors, 1909. SCCBS, County Records.

⁵⁵ Souza, "History of the Santa Cruz Public Library."

petition to the Board for the fiscal year 1911-1912, asking for \$600 in support. Finally, in May 1912, the county signed a contract with Soquel, making it the second community in Santa Cruz County to establish a branch library.

In 1912 the Soquel IOOF granted free use of their downstairs store for six months until a permanent building was erected for the library. The Soquel Porter Memorial Library dedication ceremony took place on January 27, 1913. Among the opening day speakers was ex-Lieutenant Governor Warren Porter who proclaimed, “I feel that this library will have a dominating influence on the whole community and bring with it opportunity for all.”⁵⁶

Between 1910 and 1916, many other communities sought separate library contracts with the county as well. Townships that petitioned the county board included Aptos, Brookdale, Felton, Happy Valley, Highland, Live Oak, Larkin Valley, and San Andreas.⁵⁷ Demonstrating the growing demand for branch library service, these petitions often included letters voicing the importance of a library for the community. For example, a letter from Jacob Hartman in Felton was included in a signed petition from at least forty people asking for county service.⁵⁸ Mr. Hartman writes to the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, “Dear Sirs, The residents of Felton and vicinity are universally in favor of the establishment of a sub-station of the Free County Library at the Felton schoolhouse and earnestly beg of you to use your influence in securing the adoption of a resolution at the next meeting of the Board of Supervisors next Monday

⁵⁶ Ibid., 150.

⁵⁷ Santa Cruz County Records, Two typed sheets. SCCBS, County Records.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

October 3, 1909.”⁵⁹ The petition included thirty-two signatures from local Felton residents. Another petition came from Highland, “We the undersigned residents of Highland School District, County of Santa Cruz, State of California, do respectfully request the honorable Board of Supervisors of said county of Santa Cruz to extend to us the privileges contemplated in the California County Free Library Law, according to the provisions of chapter 68 of the statutes of 1911.”⁶⁰ (Copies of these petitions can be found in Appendix B.)

Despite this continuing pressure, the County Board of Supervisors was reluctant to establish formal contracts to provide financial support for county branches. In his archives housed in the California State Library, SCPL Trustee and Santa Cruz County Supervisor, Samuel Johnson Leask, provides insight into the board’s concerns. According to Leask, these “branch” libraries were created erratically, based on public demand.⁶¹ Leask expressed his concerns and that of the board in saying that:

The basic problem arises from a lack of proper relationship between the work and service demanded by a comprehensive, well rounded county library administration and the amount of money made available for county library purposes. An inherent weakness of practically all public library organizations is the divorce between responsibility for management and operation on one hand, and control of financial support on the other. The section 16 city-county library contract has the effect of removing county library management one step further away from the boards of supervisors who vote the county library money. Under these contracts supervisors have no control over the selection or dismissal of a librarian and no authority over the city board of library trustees, which through their librarian, control county library policy. The result of this situation on the

⁵⁹ Jacob Hartman, Letter from Felton and Highland residents, three handwritten sheets including petition from residents, September 30, 1909. SCCBS, County Records.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Leask Family Papers. 1861-2002. Manuscript 2521-2600. Box 2530, Folder 12. CSL.

Board of Supervisors is apt to be either an attitude of critical antagonism or one of detached indifference, neither of these attitude being conducive of a healthy county library development.⁶³

Even without official support from the county, local communities continued to develop reading rooms and small libraries between 1910 and 1916. And while *New Notes of California Libraries* refers to these smaller institutions as “branches” or “libraries”, they are more accurately described as reading rooms located in businesses and people’s houses. Many of these small reading rooms did not have a librarian, and the custodian, if there was one, was a member of the household or the local business owner. Rural reading rooms did receive a small measure of support from the Santa Cruz Public Library. For example, Minerva Waterman or other library employees would give volunteers advice or suggest strategies for collection development. But most of the support for these libraries came from donations of books and money from the community at large. Only a few branches are mentioned in the literature and include Capitola, Felton, Mt. Hermon, Skyland and Twin Lakes. Other small branches existed but were established after 1926.⁶⁴

Two of the more successful of these local library efforts were the Brookdale and Casino libraries. Established in 1906 by local residents, the Brookdale Circulating Library was maintained by thirty members, each donating two or three volumes per

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Souza, “A History of the Santa Cruz Public Library”.

month. The small library was headquartered in the post office and run by Mrs. E. R. Stewart. In 1908, the reading room contained around sixty volumes.⁶⁵

In 1916, the Santa Cruz Library Trustees established the Casino branch at the Santa Cruz beach, close to the main entrance from Beach Street, for the summer season. The library was operated by custodian Dorothy Atkinson. The branch clearly filled a need, as 1209 books checked out that summer. The library also served as an information bureau for tourists. In the summer of 1919, the branch was open daily from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and circulated 1544 items. The branch proved so popular with tourists and locals alike that the Santa Cruz library board decided to open the library again in the summer of 1917 and continued to do so each summer until 1923.

News Notes of California Libraries, a quarterly publication issued by the California State Library, frequently published the names of many of the librarians and volunteers who worked at these early branches, providing further evidence of the interest in library organizing throughout Santa Cruz County at this time. Individuals mentioned between 1906 and 1917 include Mrs. Cora B. Cox of the Ben Lomond Branch; Miss Jennie Stagg and Miss Martha Fritch of the Boulder Creek Branch; Miss Lucy Tillotson of the Santa Cruz Branch; Miss Dorothy Atkinson and Miss Milda James of the Soquel Branch; Miss Erma Bond of the Garfield Park Branch; and Miss Bessie Patton of the Seabright Branch. Also, listed were the librarians or library custodians who worked at the more obscure and often short-lived branches: Mrs. G. L. Fritz of the Corralitos Branch; Mrs. A. G. Palmer of the Highland Branch; Miss A. Carter of the Live Oak

⁶⁵ *News Notes of California Libraries*. Vol. 1, (1906.): 144.

Branch; Miss P. Reyburn of the Mt. Herman Branch; and Miss A. Gallbraith of the Olympia Branch.⁶⁶

Whether these small libraries and reading rooms lasted through the decades or ran their course in a few years, their presence shows the need and will of the community that they served to bring about countywide branch libraries. Many locals were proud of their efforts and did whatever they could to maintain a living, breathing library in their neighborhood. This continuing effort would finally convince county authorities to formalize a county library system.

Santa Cruz Librarians and County Library Organizing: The Applications of Waterman and Herrman

Unlike the board of supervisors, Santa Cruz librarians were in favor of the movement to extend library service throughout the county. As noted above, a number of them met with Harriet Eddy when she spoke at the California Library Association meeting in 1909, and SCPL librarians informally assisted the volunteers working in the rural reading rooms and branches. Two Santa Cruz librarians, Minerva Waterman and Bessie Herrman, showed further commitment by obtaining county library certification from the California State Library's Board of Library Examiners. Housed in the California State Archives, the two applications offer great insight into the librarians' opinions and their vision of a coordinated library system in Santa Cruz County.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ *News Notes of California Libraries*. California State Library. Vols. 1-11.

⁶⁷ California State Library Board of Examiners, County Library Typeset Applications and handwritten responses, 1911-12. State Library Archives, Sacramento, CA.

Minerva Waterman submitted her application in 1912. It was comparatively short, and most questions that she was asked by the Board of Examiners were irrelevant to the position of county librarian. However, the most revealing question regarding Waterman's opinion was question number one, which asked: "What are your reasons for and wishes to engage in county library work"? To this, Waterman replied: "County work presents the best opportunity for progressive library work. The county system could be the next logical step in providing library service to a greater area within the county. By cooperating in this way, libraries and librarians can make great progress towards countywide service."⁶⁸

Bessie Herrman grew up in Toledo, Ohio, and moved to the central coast shortly before 1911. She worked as a librarian at the Ohio State Library and spent one year with the Ohio State Traveling Library. She also worked for a short while as a librarian in San Luis Obispo. Submitted in 1911, Herrman's application was more detailed than Waterman's and offers useful insight into a librarian's perspective on the value of the county library system and the steps needed to establish the system in Santa Cruz.

Herrman's application contained five relevant questions. The first question asked what her reasons were for engaging in county library work. Herrman responded: "Am homesick to be back in this work, and this is more like my previous work than any other phase of library activity." The second asked her to describe current county library organizing, to which Herrman replied: "The work is being appreciated more and more as the Boards of Supervisors realize what the service means to their communities and

⁶⁸ Ibid.

counties, so that in almost every county the appropriations have materially increased each year.”⁶⁹ Furthermore, “the California county system is the most developed and funded compared to all other states in the country.” Question three asked: “If you were appointed county librarian what steps would you take to put the county free library into operation?” Herrman responded that “after the appointment I should place orders for books and equipment. While waiting for these to arrive, the county should be visited, custodians selected and sites for reading rooms decided upon. The women’s clubs, teachers, county officials should be visited in order to secure their cooperation, and the county free library service should be as thoroughly advertised as possible that the people might take advantage of their opportunities as soon as the opportunities were offered.” Question four asked what would the county librarian need or ask from the California State Library? “The State Library is ready and willing to be of inestimable service to the county,” Herrman wrote, “and I should call on that service for any and all reference material needed by my people that could not be supplied by the county library.”

The final question sought the applicant’s ideas in regards to cooperation in county free library work. Herrman’s answer was that “the possibilities for service are great as the county may grant library privileges to an adjoining county which has contracted for such privileges or to any unincorporated town which has made satisfactory terms. Help can also be given to struggling libraries in small towns, to schools or special libraries. Agricultural societies, teachers associations and women’s clubs can all be helped and help immeasurably by spreading the good news to other societies needing help to say

⁶⁹ Ibid.

nothing of the privilege of lending to or borrowing from other libraries of the same county, nearby counties and the large libraries of the state.” Lastly, Herrman stated that the advantages of a county system are that after joining “the city would have access to a full range of resources through the county operation. The city or town library that joined would also have access to larger funding, reading rooms, access to county counsel and advice regarding the purchase of books, advertising, management and tax matters.”

Santa Cruz County Establishes a County Library System

Clearly many local leaders and librarians were convinced of the benefits a county library system would bring to the region. Despite the board of supervisor’s lack of support, rural towns throughout the county were forming reading rooms and branch libraries, while others petitioned the board in an effort to secure financial support. Many articles and editorials appeared in the local newspapers asking for greater library service. These actions, when combined, formed a chorus of support for library county service and provided the necessary momentum to finally make it happen.

The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors took its first step toward establishing a countywide library system in April 1916 when it announced that it was sending District Attorney George W. Smith to Los Angeles and other Southern California counties to investigate their county library systems.⁷⁰ The supervisors, in particular, wanted to see how the new county system was working in other counties before they committed to creating one in Santa Cruz. Smith favored the county library plan, which most likely had a positive influence on his observations and his subsequent

⁷⁰ “District Attorney Leaves for South,” *Santa Cruz Evening News*, April 4, 1916.

recommendations to the board. As the *Santa Cruz Evening News* reported, “District Attorney Smith favors the county libraries, as do the supervisors, and it is hoped that a satisfactory plan will be evolved so that the Ben Lomond, Soquel and other libraries may be maintained.”⁷¹

Continuing its pressure on the county board, the newspaper published an impassioned letter to the editor on the importance of county libraries the following day. The anonymous author, who signed his letter as “one from the country,” declared: “I do not believe that our Supervisors have seriously considered the educational value of a library to the people who live in the country. You people in town have your lectures, concerts, and fine library, all educational, besides many sources of amusement. What have the country people have? Nothing of the kind except the library; hence our libraries are almost only, and to many the only, source of education and entertainment.”⁷² Toward the end of the letter, the writer made a final impassioned plea: “The libraries of Boulder Creek, Ben Lomond and Soquel are patronized by hundreds of country people who get their brain food from this supply. Can our supervisors cut out this supply of education? It seems to me we cannot compute or overestimate the educational value to the children and adults alike of these libraries. Of course the county library plan is the only feasible one that is stable and secure and that provides for all alike.”⁷³

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² “A Word in Behalf of County Libraries from Rural President,” *Santa Cruz Evening News*, April 5, 1916.

⁷³ Ibid.

The district attorney returned from his week-long visit to Southern California to make his recommendations to the board. In an interview with the *Evening News*, Smith stated that he was very impressed with the county library model in Los Angeles whereby county administrators had been very successful in moving books all throughout the county. He also acknowledged that Los Angeles County could more easily accomplish this because it had more wealth than Santa Cruz County. Smith added that “Fresno County was the most up-to-date county model that he had seen during his travels in Southern California.”⁷⁴ In 1910, the city libraries of Fresno, Fowler and Selma disestablished their city libraries in order to successfully become part of a unified county library system under Section 12 of the County Library Law.⁷⁵

Based on his survey of county library systems, District Attorney Smith advised the supervisors to adopt a system in which Santa Cruz County would contract with the county’s large city libraries to provide services to the rural branches. As Smith explained, “The trustees of the public libraries at Santa Cruz and Watsonville should have control of the county libraries.” He further proposed that “the supervisors should provide them with the necessary funds from taxes—estimated at one mill on the dollar of assessed property—raised in the county outside the incorporated cities.”⁷⁶

At its meeting on November 6, 1916, the Santa Cruz Library Board of Trustees reported on the results of their negotiations with the county. County and library officials agreed that in coordinating the county system the Santa Cruz Public Library “shall

⁷⁴ “Planning for Libraries,” *Santa Cruz Evening News*, April 10, 1916.

⁷⁵ Eddy, *County Free Library Organizing*, 12.

⁷⁶ “Planning for Libraries,” *Santa Cruz Evening News*, April 10, 1916.

establish branch libraries, deposit stations and delivery stations in the various parts of said county whenever expedient and feasible with the means at its disposal and that the librarians will visit each branch periodically to observe, make recommendations and provide a needs assessment.”⁷⁷

At the same meeting, the Santa Cruz Library Board of Trustees unanimously adopted and approved a contract with the county to provide county library services.⁷⁸ The contract had been prepared with the help of District Attorney Smith, the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, J. H. Harvey, as well as Santa Cruz Library Trustees Samuel Leask, Wilson R. Springer, and Martin L. Rittenhouse. Prepared October 3, 1916, the contract was to run from October 15, 1916, to the following October. (Full text of the contract can be found in Appendix C.) The county library contract covered the entire county for tax and service except the Cities of Santa Cruz and Watsonville. The county system’s budget for the 1916-1917 fiscal year was \$1870.95 with \$1182.75 coming from the county under the contract.⁷⁹

To get the county library system started, Minerva Waterman visited every town and school district in hopes of organizing a new county library branch.⁸⁰ In her July 1917 report to city officials, Waterman mentions the county contract signed the previous fall and reviews her work since then. “During the six months following,” she stated, “your

⁷⁷ Santa Cruz Library Board of Trustees, Meeting Minutes, November 6, 1916, pp. 39-40. SCPL.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Minerva Waterman, Report to the Mayor and Commissioners of Santa Cruz City, 1917. SCPL.

⁸⁰ “County Libraries Spreading Their Good Influence,” *Santa Cruz Evening News*, March 5, 1918.

librarian has visited 53 school districts; libraries have been established in 23 schools and districts.”⁸¹ A year later, she reported:

The Santa Cruz County Library has now been in operation for about a year and a half, with every indication that the service is thoroughly satisfactory to the residents of the County. During the year, the County Library has served the following county branches—Ben Lomond, Boulder Creek, Corralitos, Olympia, Skyland, Soquel and part of the year Capitola, Brookdale and Mt. Hermon. School and community branches now established are Amesti, Aptos, Bald Mountain, Boulder Creek Elementary, Brown, Brown’s Valley, Casserly, Cave Gulch, Central, Corralitos, Dougherty, Eureka, Felton, Fruitvale, Green Valley, Happy Valley, Hazel Dell, Hester Creek, Highland, Hill, Jefferson, Larkin Valley, Laurel, Live Oak, Martin, Oakdale, Pacific, Pleasant Valley, Railroad Roache, Redwood, San Andreas, Sequoia, Soquel Union, Valencia and Vine Hill. The service now being given covers the greater part of the County and permits practically every resident to take advantage of the collection of over 30,000 volumes now owned by the municipal library. The arrangement is working smoothly and gives every evidence of becoming a permanent feature of the community life of the County.⁸²

As a result of Waterman’s outreach efforts, as many as twenty-three communities petitioned the board of supervisors for library service. Many of the new branches were housed in the town’s school, which meant that both adults and children were being served. The school districts’ participation in the new city/county library system was very important and necessary in order for the new county system to grow and serve a wider array of library patrons throughout the county.

⁸¹ Minerva Waterman, Report to the Board Trustees, July 1 1917. SCPL.

⁸² Minerva Waterman, Report to the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, July 1918. SCPL.

Conclusion

Between 1880 and 1916, Santa Cruz County witnessed a steady growth in library services. Starting with small reading rooms established by local improvement associations, the cities of Santa Cruz and Watsonville built the first free-standing libraries with funding from the Carnegie Corporation. While the Watsonville City library remained unchanged during this time, by 1913 SCPL added three branches within the city limits. Thereafter, other communities sought to develop library services, with the towns of Soquel, Ben Lomond, and Boulder Creek successfully petitioning the County Board of Supervisors to contract with the county for library funds. The news of these county-funded branches spread throughout the county which prompted as many as ninety other communities to ask for library service as well.⁸³ If not for the clamor of so many rural communities for library service, a unified system may have never happened. The board of supervisors finally capitulated and approved the 1916 contract with the Santa Cruz Public Library to establish a countywide library system. By the end of the 1920s, most county residents had a branch library that was reasonably close to their town.

One community, however, remained distinctly aloof from the county library movement—Watsonville. The following chapter will review the history of the Watsonville Public Library and its refusal to join the Santa Cruz county library system.

⁸³*New Notes of California Libraries* 13 (October 1918): 735.

Chapter 3

History of the Watsonville Public Library and its Refusal to Join the County Library System

The citizens of Watsonville have a proud history in relation to their city's library. Their level of involvement and support can be witnessed in the many articles written by the editors of and contributors to the local newspaper, the *Pajaronian*; in the actions of local civic groups, such as the Odd Fellows, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and the Watsonville Woman's Club; and in the records left by city officials. All of these stakeholders were very interested in turning their small agricultural town into a community that included amenities of city life, most notably a vibrant public library. They were proud of their involvement in and early development of reading rooms, literary clubs, and the eventual building of a Carnegie library in 1905. Indeed, Watsonville citizens, community leaders, and elected officials have been so committed to their public library that they have steadfastly refused to join the county library system since it was first proposed by State Librarian James Gillis in 1909.

This chapter will discuss the founding of the Watsonville Public Library and the role local community members played in its early development. This includes the library's early organizing efforts and first library association. The chapter will discuss the local women's groups and specific individuals who were instrumental in organizing early libraries in Watsonville and carrying the momentum forward in building the city's first dedicated library. It will also describe the process by which the city obtained a grant

from the Carnegie Corporation and the building of its historic library. Finally, the chapter will consider the decision of city officials to reject joining the county library system and the political and ideological issues that led them to that decision.

Early Library Organizing

One of the more interesting themes in the history of both Watsonville and Santa Cruz is the involvement of local civic groups in their early library movements. Some of these societies were focused on town improvements while others were specifically concerned with literacy and education. These groups played a key role in organizing Watsonville's first library associations and reading rooms and fostering the desire among the populace for a more permanent public library.

The first library association in Watsonville was organized in 1860 and named the Watsonville Library and Literary Association. The association's early meetings were held in the office of Judge A. W. Blair located on Main and Fourth Streets. The association's two original members were Ed Martin and Joseph D. Ordish, with Ordish serving as recording secretary. Ordish also owned the land on Maple Avenue which would later become the site of the public library. In 1864, A. Devoe was elected president, T. Maher vice president, J. W. Shepherd secretary, O. P. Wilcox librarian, and H. H. Stewart treasurer.¹ No mention was made in the surviving historical documents of any women involved in the association. These were lively evening congregations for the pleasure of reading, discussing literature, and raising money for books and magazines for the fledgling association. *Harper's*, *Godey's Ladies' Book* and the *Golden Era* were

¹Edward Martin, Letter to the Editor, *Evening Pajaronian*, February 9, 1905.

among the magazines collected as well as the local weekly newspaper, the *Pajaro Valley Times*, precursor to the *Pajaronian*.²

The early reading room continued to operate for over a decade, though it moved around quite a bit. After several years, the association decided that Judge Blair's office was too small, and it relocated the reading room to Scott's Hall across from the Plaza. In 1868, the library moved again to the Evergreen Cottage on Maple Avenue. The Watsonville Library and Literary Association flourished for some time but was disbanded around 1870. The books were put in storage for several years, until they were purchased by the Odd Fellows library.³

The next organization to establish a reading room in Watsonville was the IOOF, an international social organization for men, whose credo is to "visit the sick, relieve the distressed, bury the dead and educate the orphan."⁴ The Watsonville IOOF, Pajaro Lodge #90, received its charter in 1859 and grew to become one of the largest social organizations in the valley, constructing its own lodge in 1893.⁵ In 1873, the Odd Fellows purchased the defunct library association's stock of 700-800 books for \$144.50 and opened their own library in the Stoesser Block.⁶

² Ibid.

³ Henry Jackson, "Second Life of Public Library," *Evening Pajaronian*, February 10, 1905.

⁴ "IOOF—Who are the Oddfellows?" [Except from "Odd Fellows Cemetery Historical Walking Tour" pamphlet.] Pajaro Valley Historical Association Collection, Watsonville, CA. Hereafter will be cited as PVHA Collection.

⁵ Betty Lewis, "How Watsonville Finally Got Itself a Public Library," *Register Pajaronian*, October 16, 1980.

⁶ "Stoesser's New Brick Block," *Pajaronian*, May 22, 1873.

The main building was two stories, with the library reading room on the second floor along with four other office spaces.

The IOOF's library was located in the largest and finest hall occupied by a Santa Cruz civic organization.⁷ With large plate glass windows and doors, the space was infused with light, and upon entering visitors would see a "beautifully executed painting by Mr.'s Austin and Judd," to quote the local newspaper, "that gives a cheerful aspect to the whole."⁸ Open on Sunday afternoons and Thursday evenings, the reading room could be used by both IOOF members and the general public. However, the reading room was not free; the general public paid a membership fee of five dollars a year, while IOOF members paid two dollars per year.⁹ According to the library's first ledger, both men and women were able to borrow materials.¹⁰ Unfortunately, the types of materials that the library provided for its patrons were not recorded. Rather than listing the titles of the books that were borrowed, each ledger entry only noted the volume numbers, date drawn, and date returned. What is known, however, is that in 1873 the library contained 500 volumes that covered poetry, biography, travel, and history.¹¹

Although the IOOF library association had only thirty members when it started, the Odd Fellows were hopeful in their efforts to grow a local library. As one member reported in the local newspaper, "A membership of 30 is not a very flattering showing

⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ I.O.O.F. Ledgers, 1873-1890, Historical Records, Watsonville Public Library, Watsonville, CA. Hereafter cited as WPL Records.

¹¹ *Pajaronian*, May 22, 1873.

and we hope that the next time we speak of the library there will be at least 75 members from the society alone.”¹² He also expressed the hope that “various wealthy persons in town” would donate books “and thereby receive the thanks of the order and citizens generally.”¹³ Towards the end of the reading room’s existence, there were upwards of 500 members according to the 1884 ledger.¹⁴

Not to be outdone by the Odd Fellows, in May 1881 the local chapter of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) opened its own library for the public in the Rink, also known as the Opera House. The library was short lived, however, and closed in July due to lack of interest. Thirteen years later, in 1894, the WCTU established another reading room in the Opera House Annex, which was open during the day and evening. Mrs. Bagnall, a WCTU member, served as first librarian, and the city contributed five dollars a month for the library’s maintenance.¹⁵ Other WCTU members who supported the reading room included Mary Tuttle, Abbie A. Morehead, Lavonia P. Millets, Sarah J. Kidder, and Mrs. Worthington.¹⁶

Although the WCTU was focused on town improvement, it was also very interested in family values, virtuous pursuits, and education. As a result, members wanted the library to be an institution that only contained proper Christian publications

¹² Ibid.

¹³ I.O.O.F. Member, *Pajaronian*. May 22, 1873.

¹⁴ I.O.O.F. Ledgers, 1873-1890, WPL Records.

¹⁵ *Pajaronian*, July 12, 1894.

¹⁶ Many women were conventionally referred to as Mrs. or Miss and their last name or connected to the husband’s full name during this time period. By using extensive cross referencing, many women’s first names were found that were not initially included in the historical documents. For those women whose first names are omitted, no historical record could be found that provided the information.

whether they be magazines or books. The local WCTU members were happy to donate books and money to the reading room as long as they had an influence on the types of materials that the library carried.¹⁷ As the local newspaper reported at the time, the reading room was “open, as in the past to all reputable persons of orderly conduct. Any resident of Watsonville or tax-paying non-resident above the age of fourteen, may draw books for home usage without charge.”¹⁸

While these early efforts by the IOOF and the WCTU helped establish the first libraries in Watsonville, the overall values and goals of the groups were in conflict with the ultimate goal of a free public library. Many members of the community desired library service for all, regardless of religion or social status. So in 1896, local citizens circulated and signed a petition which was to be delivered to city officials asking for a city-sponsored free public library.¹⁹ The Rogers Act, passed in 1878 and signed by Governor of California, William Irwin, authorized cities to establish and maintain free public libraries and reading rooms. The law also granted authority to California municipalities to set up a tax levy within certain limits and stipulated that the city could appoint a board of trustees as well as purchase or accept as donation the collections of existing reading rooms and libraries.²⁰ Thus, the petition submitted by residents in 1896 was the beginnings of the Watsonville Public Library, although it would take seven more years before an official charter was created.

¹⁷ Watsonville Library Board of Trustees Secretary’s Report, April, 1901. WPL Records.

¹⁸ *Pajaronian*, November 26, 1896.

¹⁹ *Evening Pajaronian*, September 2, 1904.

²⁰ Held, *The Rise of the Public Library in California*, 83-84.

Founding and Early Years of the Watsonville Public Library

In 1896, the city's Board of Aldermen, supported by the vote of local citizens and following the rules of the Rogers Act, established the legal guidelines and taxation which allowed the library to form. At some point after the Carnegie library was built in 1903, library officials also created this statement of purpose: "The Watsonville Public Library exists in order to provide for all individuals and groups in the community, free, impartial and convenient access to the universe, in all its aspects, through books and other recorded materials."²¹ Both the IOOF and the WCTU donated their respective book and magazine collections to the city which provided a good start to the new city library.

Watsonville's early public library history is noteworthy for the significant role that women played in its pioneering years. Two local women's groups provided most of the momentum for the town library's formation and maintenance, though each played a different role. The local WCTU members continued their involvement with the library, sponsoring the reading room and collecting donations of books and magazines to fill its shelves. WTCU members also served on the first library board of trustees. The Watsonville Woman's Club, on the other hand, formed specifically to support a library building that would fit a growing collection and showcase the civic pride of the city. This club's influence will be discussed in more detail shortly. Finally, the city's first librarian, Belle M. Jenkins, can be credited with transforming a small, privately funded reading room into a popular public institution.

²¹ Ibid.

Given the prominence of women in the public library's establishment, it is not surprising that its first board of trustees was comprised entirely of women. When the city library was established in 1896, Mrs. Mary Tuttle was elected the board's first president. She was also on the board of directors of the local WCTU and a founding member of the Watsonville Woman's Club. Mrs. Tuttle's family had made its fortune as butchers, opening a small chain of butcher shops in Watsonville. This allowed her time to serve as the library board president for eleven years and gave her the financial resources to make several contributions to the library over the years in the form of cash and books.²²

Other pioneering library board members included: Eva Dickerman, Lavonia Willits, Sarah J. Kidder, and Abbie Morehead. According to the City Directory for 1899, Eva Dickerman's husband was an attorney, while Lavonia Willits's family were farmers and "breeders of Percheron horses." Sarah Kidder was a teacher, and Abbie Morehead's husband was a "householder", later listed in 1902 as a "capitalist."²³ These pioneering board members were also involved in the Watsonville WCTU and early supporters of the library.

As noted above, the Watsonville Woman's Club did not organize its own library association or reading room. Instead, its main objective was to secure a library building for the city so that the library would have a permanent location. At the May 19, 1917, meeting, charter member, Ellen Cox, explained what brought the women together to form

²²Dayna Holz. "The Watsonville Public Library: Study of the Early Years of the Library's History and User Groups," (San Jose State University term paper, San Jose, CA, May 9, 2002). WPL Records.

²³*Polk's Watsonville City Directory* (San Francisco, CA: R.L. Polk and Co., 1899, 1902).

the club in 1899. “They were readers and thinkers,” Cox recalled of the club’s founders, continuing: “Our public library at that time was and had been in a precarious condition. It had no home of its own, but was housed in the Opera House building on Third Street. It needed fostering. Feeling the appeal of all these needs one of these women pondered on the advisability of taking the initiative in establishing a Woman’s Club.”²⁴

The first meeting of the Watsonville Woman’s Club was held at the Watsonville High School on February 18, 1899. In Article 1 Section 2 of the club’s first constitution, the goals of the club were established: “The object of this club shall be the literary improvement and social advancement of its members, and the benefit of the public library.”²⁵ The officers elected were: president, Florilla Wickersham (teacher); vice president, Mrs. Francis L. McCarthy; recording secretary, Kara Allen (teacher); corresponding secretary, Mrs. Ida McAdam; treasurer, Mrs. Roberta Wilson Rogers. The board of directors included Mrs. Evangeline Dickerman; Maud Grover (would become Chandler); and Mrs. Mary Cadwell.²⁶ Among the other original members was Mary E. Tuttle, first president of the Watsonville Public Library Board of Trustees.²⁷

Another woman who was inextricably bound with the early life of the public library was the city’s first librarian, Belle Jenkins. Born in 1861 in Massachusetts, Jenkins moved with her family to the small town of San Antonio in Monterey County around 1870. The US Census lists her father Edward Jenkins as a farmer and her mother,

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Watsonville Woman’s Club, [Two Typed Sheets], January 5, 1996, PVHA Collection.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

Dorcas M. Jenkins as “keeping house.” Before Jenkins came to be a librarian for Watsonville, she was a dressmaker in San Jose, California. The 1920 US Census shows Belle Jenkins at fifty-five years of age as head of household and owning her own home in Watsonville. In addition to Jenkins’s many years of library service, she was also very involved in local improvement societies. She was a member of the Order of Eastern Star, Lily of the Valley Chapter and the Paradise Rebekah Lodge. Upon her passing on July 27, 1935 the *Pajaronian* opined:

Many will remember her as the beloved first librarian of Watsonville before the present building recently improved, was built. In fact, the history of the local public library is inextricably bound with the early life of Miss Jenkins in Watsonville. For 32 years she advised young and old what to read when they came to her for suggestions. Her entire energies seemed devoted to making of the library a source of intellectual stimulation.²⁸

Hired in 1896, Jenkins focused her efforts on developing the library’s collections and services. The many annual reports Jenkins submitted to the California State Library document her successful career. Her first report in 1906 indicated that the library contained 4,197 volumes and had 750 cardholders. In 1912, these numbers had risen to 6,088 volumes and 1,956 cardholders. By 1916, the library had 7,500 volumes and 2,500, with a total circulation of items of 5,037. Toward the end of her tenure in 1929, Jenkins was in charge of a budget of \$5,427, and the library contained 13, 262 volumes, had 2,875 cardholders, and a total circulation of 43,355.

²⁸ “Belle Jenkins Passes Away Early Today”, *Evening Pajaronian*, (July 27, 1935): 1.

Many in Watsonville credited Jenkins with the success and popularity of the town's library. The local newspaper editor had similar praise: "Miss Jenkins was something more than an official of this city in her capacity as librarian of the free public library. To a certain extent, if we may be permitted to use the appellation, she was an 'institution,' that is, thirty-two years ago, by her patient endeavor she established in this city, a small library and reading room that, God, alone, knew how much benefit it has been."²⁹ As an example of Jenkins's dedication, the *Pajaronian* editor wrote about coming into the library one cold evening and noticing the effort it took for Jenkins to make her patrons comfortable. "Time and time again," he wrote, "this faithful little librarian, in order to heat the room, would wrap up a few pieces of stove-wood in a paper, at her home and carry them down town so as to make the library room somewhat enduring and comfortable."³⁰ While many changes took place within the library over the years, the library board never sought to change the city's librarian. As the local newspaper noted in its tribute to Jenkins upon her retirement in 1929, "They knew her worth, and realized in Miss Jenkins they possessed a librarian that other communities would have been glad to pay three and four times the salary that she received here."³¹ "Ever courteous, obliging and helpful, not alone to us but to everyone who entered the portals of the library," the newspaper continued, "her leaving will bring with keen regret to the frequenters of the library's reading room."³²

²⁹ "Watsonville Loses Service of a Most Faithful Official," *Pajaronian*, January, 11, 1929.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

Watsonville's Carnegie Library

The Watsonville Public Library was initially housed in a small rented room in the IOOF Hall. Then, in 1899, the library moved to a “small hole in the wall on Third St.,” where it remained until a dedicated library building could be found.³³ Two major questions stood before the library board, city aldermen, and community groups in their quest for a permanent library: where to build the library and how to finance it. In 1899, the Carnegie Corporation began its program to fund public library buildings, which coincided with a rise in women's clubs during the Progressive Era. As noted in chapter 2, before a town or city could receive funds, the recipient was required to demonstrate the need for a public library, secure a building site, allocate annually ten percent of the cost of the library's construction to support its operation, and provide free service to all. Another requirement was the local government's willingness to raise taxes to support the library. The amount of tax money allocated was based on U.S. census figures, which averaged about two dollars per resident. By 1919 there were approximately 3,500 libraries in the United States, half of which were built with Carnegie grant funds.³⁴

As noted earlier, the Watsonville Woman's Club Library Committee was formed in 1899 to investigate what should be done to secure a permanent library building. In September, the committee recommended to local officials that city representatives

³³ Watsonville Woman's Club, “Historical Moments” [2 typed sheets], January 5, 1996, PVHA Collection.

³⁴ George Bobinski, *Carnegie Libraries: Their History and Impact on American Public Library Development* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1969).

approach Andrew Carnegie for money to build a library. As a consequence, letters to the Carnegie Corporation were sent by the Watsonville Woman's Club president, Ms. Wheeler, and library board secretary, Charlotte Bockius, both of whom were early vocal supporters of the library.³⁵ Library Board President Mary Tuttle and her family had personal ties with a friend of Carnegie's personal secretary, James Bertram, which further helped secure the grant.³⁶ After three years of correspondence between the library board, members of the women's club, and Carnegie's assistant James Bertram, Watsonville heard back from the Carnegie Corporation with promising news. A formal application was sent on March 16, 1903, by the President of the Watsonville City Council, W.A. Trafton, requesting a sum of \$10,000 for a new public library.³⁷ In the application, the city agreed to provide the lot for the new building as well as \$1000 a year towards the library's maintenance. Within a few weeks, on April 30, 1903, the official news arrived from the Carnegie Corporation that the city's application had been approved.³⁸

After Watsonville's application was accepted by the Carnegie Corporation, the next step was to select a site for the new library. This turned out to be a surprisingly controversial and politicized issue. Some officials and residents thought that the library should be built in the town plaza because of its central location and to save the city money. Others argued that the plaza was built for the open space it provided and a new

³⁵ Watsonville Woman's Club, Two typed sheets, January 5, 1996, PVHA Collection.

³⁶ Minutes of the Meetings of the Watsonville Women's Club, May 2, 1903, PVHA Collection.

³⁷ *Pajaronian*, April 16, 1903.

³⁸ *Pajaronian*, April 30, 1903.

building would cause unnecessary crowding.³⁹ H. S. Fletcher, cashier of the Pajaro Valley Bank who would later become bank president, voiced his opinion in the local paper:

The original owners of the Watsonville town site instructed the referees in the partition of the Bolsa de Pajaro to set apart a certain portion for a plaza, to be used as a breathing place for the benefit of all residents of the locality, rich and poor alike, and the plaza, as it now stands, the pride of all who have a regard for the beautiful, seems the realization of the intention of the givers in their generosity for posterity. If it is lawful, proper or just to cover part of the plaza with a Carnegie library, it would be equally so to put the city hall, calaboose and engine house thereon, and this idea has been already advanced. Any and all such suggestions are repulsive to lovers of the beautiful and could only emanate from utilitarians [sic] whose early environment precluded the direction of their tastes toward adornment. The plaza should be left as it is. The law will not allow it to be disfigured.⁴⁰

Several members of the board of aldermen expressed alternative views regarding the library's location. For example, Alderman J. E. Ostrander from the Third Ward stated,

My view is altogether from a point of utility. I think the center of the plaza could be well used for a small library building. \$10,000 will not pay for a very large one and it could be made low, so the top could be used for a band stand and place from which to make public addresses. Other cities have buildings of the kind in their parks for museums, etc., and I think as the band stand and library would be in the line of public amusements, they ought to be in the plaza.⁴¹

Aldermen Dr. Nathan Green, First Ward, and T. J. Horgan, Third Ward, supported the idea of building the library in the plaza as well. Other alderman, however, were against

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ *The Pajaronian*, May 7, 1903.

putting the library in the plaza, including W. H. Meadowcroft, Fourth Ward, H. A. Peterson, First Ward, and W. H. P. Hill, Second Ward. The Native Daughters of the Golden West local chapter and the Watsonville Woman's Club were also against placing the library in the plaza for much of the same reason as H. S. Fletcher. Both groups wanted to retain the wishes of the original grantors of the plaza and have it remain a place of "quiet, restful, spirit-calming place of recreation; a spot where for the moment of fancy." As a letter published in the *Pajaronian* enjoined, "Let the plaza continue to be our miniature Garden of Eden"⁴²

To resolve this debate, the board of aldermen passed a resolution to hold a city election to allow residents to choose the location for their library.⁴³ Newly elected mayor and realtor, Richard Quinn, initially supported this resolution, but then changed his mind at the last minute.⁴⁴ He vetoed the resolution and unilaterally decided that the library should be built in the plaza with no election held.⁴⁵ Quinn claimed that he cancelled the election because he believed that some 200 property owners in town had not been placed on the assessment rolls by the city assessor, thus denying them the opportunity to vote in the city election. He argued that it was unconstitutional to deny any voter a voice in such an election.⁴⁶ As Quinn explained at the November 18, 1903, board of aldermen meeting:

My chief reason for so doing is that I do not think it right or just to deny the right of suffrage to a large majority of voters of this city. Section

⁴² *The Pajaronian*, July 30, 1903.

⁴³ *Evening Pajaronian*, November 19, 1903.

⁴⁴ *Evening Pajaronian*, November 21, 1903.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Pajaronian*, November 19, 1903.

1 of Article II of our State Constitution explains the constitutional rights of voters. When we abridge this section I do not think we are upholding the constitution we swore to support when we assumed the duties of our respective offices. I am willing to sign any resolution which will neither deny nor abridge the right of any citizen of the State to vote on account of property rights or his position in society.”⁴⁷

Other city residents had a more cynical interpretation of the mayor’s motives.

An article appearing in the *Pajaronian* surmised that “in consideration of the circumstances under which the resolution was passed by the Board, the Mayor’s veto is unexplainable, except upon the ground that he had truckled to the influence of a small coterie of San Jose politicians who are endeavoring to dictate the conduct of municipal affairs in this city.”⁴⁸ Furthermore, since Richard Quinn was an active realtor, it is also possible that his real estate connections or aspirations had something to do with his position on where to build the library.

At this same time, the city government was experiencing additional controversy over the mayor’s recent election. The runner-up in the 1904 mayoral race, Will Trafton, had lost by only four votes. Trafton appealed to the California State Supreme Court regarding the legality of the ballots cast for each candidate. The court authorized a recount, and an investigation revealed that ten votes were mistakenly counted for Quinn. On July 8, 1904, Trafton became the city’s new mayor.⁴⁹

Trafton was one of the few prominent men in public life to be born in Watsonville. His father, G. A. Trafton, was one of the earliest pioneers of Pajaro Valley.

⁴⁷ *Evening Pajaronian*, November 19, 1903.

⁴⁸ *Pajaronian*. November 21, 1903.

⁴⁹ Betty Lewis, “Library’s difficult beginning,” *Register-Pajaronian*, (February 17, 1995).

The senior Tafton started a flour, feed, and grain business, which would become “one of the most potent factors in the development of Watsonville.”⁵⁰ William Trafton would join his father’s business and become just as active in the commercial, industrial, and civic advancement of Watsonville. Trafton was President of the local Native Sons of the Golden West, member of the Masons, Commander of the Knights Templar, and longtime Vice President of the Chamber of Commerce. He would also play an important role in the early development of the public library.

Trafton’s first order of business as mayor was to appoint a new Board of Library Trustees. Continuing with the city’s tradition of having an all-female board, Trafton appointed Mrs. Eva Dickerman, Mrs. M. E. Tuttle, Mrs. Abbie Morehead, Miss Charlotte Bockius, and Miss Vina Redman. Dickerman, Tuttle, and Morehead had served on the previous board. Both Bockius and Redman had influential business and political connections in Watsonville, which led to their appointments to the board. Charlotte Bockius was daughter to well-known judge, Godfrey M. Bockius. Vina Redman was a founding member of the Watsonville Woman’s Club.⁵¹

When Board of Aldermen met again in September 1904, they rescinded their prior vote to have the library built in the plaza. They then voted to buy the Bixby lot that stood at the corner of Trafton and Union Streets for \$2000.⁵² Design notices went out via the newspaper on September 5, inviting firms to submit architectural plans.⁵³ Not

⁵⁰ C. Marinovich, Davis’ Commercial Encyclopedia of the Pacific Southwest, 1911.

⁵¹ www.ancestry.com; Watsonville Woman’s Club, PVHA Collection.

⁵² *Evening Pajaronian*, November 19, 1904.

⁵³ *The Pajaronian*, October, 1904.

surprisingly, famed local architect William H. Weeks was chosen to design the town's new Carnegie library.

There was much pride among Watsonville residents in the fact that such a talented architect resided in the city. As local historian Betty Lewis writes, "Without a doubt, when one is considering all of the men who contributed so much to the Pajaro Valley, Will Weeks would have to be chosen as the one man who left the largest and most lasting imprint on the face of the city. His designs are spread over the valley in such numbers as to be almost overwhelming."⁵⁴ A partial list of houses and buildings that Weeks designed in the city includes homes on 327 Green Valley Road, 110 Maple Avenue, 265 East Third, 328 Union, and 100 East Third, both homes of Owen Tuttle, and buildings such as the high school, Christian Church, Watsonville Brewery, Cooper Building, Bockius Building, Green Valley School, and the Lewis Block.⁵⁵ Weeks took great personal pride in his hometown and the citizens of Watsonville, and upon being chosen as the library's architect, he assured the aldermen at their November 1904 board meeting that they would get the best possible library for their \$10,000 Carnegie grant.⁵⁶

The Granite Rock Company won the bid for construction at just under \$12,000. Based on this figure, the Carnegie Corporation agreed to add another \$2000 to the original grant amount.⁵⁷ In turn, the City of Watsonville also agreed to increase the annual maintenance contribution to \$1200.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Lewis, *Watsonville: Memories that Linger*, 181.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁵⁶ *Pajaronian*, November 19, 1904

⁵⁷ *Pajaronian*, December 14, 1904.

⁵⁸ *Evening Pajaronian*, September 2, 1904.

The new Carnegie library opened its doors in October 1905, just two years after the first letter was sent to Carnegie by the Watsonville Woman's Club. Architect Weeks designed the library in the Classical Revival Style, using pressed brick and Arizona sandstone for its construction. In anticipation of the new library's opening the local newspaper described its interior in effusive detail:

Stone steps led to the entrance and a tiled vestibule within. The principal rooms are en suite, and consist of a commodious general reading room, lobby and stack room, and juvenile reading room. These are connected by handsome archways with corresponding pillars. The other rooms on the main floor are committee room, librarian's room, and ladies parlor. Lavatories, toilets, etc., are on this floor. The basement contains a furnace room, receiving room and storage room. The whole interior of the building is finished in artistic and enduring style.⁵⁹

The citizens of Watsonville were very happy with and proud of their new Carnegie library. The library was meant to showcase the city's civic growth and to serve the residents. Designed for city population of 4000, with 3500 books with an expected circulation of 12,000 annually, the library grew quickly and within fifteen years it was severely overcrowded with books and patrons. In 1934, the building was expanded with the help of federal funds to accommodate the growing usage by local patrons.⁶⁰ Statistics on library usage during this time period will be covered in detail in chapter four.

After the Carnegie Library opened, it quickly became apparent that additional staff was needed to help run the day-to-day operations of an expanded location and a more demanding building maintenance. While Belle Jenkins remained the librarian, Jerome Porter was hired as the janitor and support staff, later filling the role of her

⁵⁹ "Interior of the Carnegie Library," *The Pajaronian*, (February, 1905).

⁶⁰ Watsonville Library Staff, Two typed sheets, June 2, 1951. WPL Collection.

assistant. Because Jenkins lacked professional library training, the library board also hired Jane Shepard as a temporary employee to catalog the library's collection.⁶¹ Shepard was a cataloguer by profession and came down from San Francisco to do the job.⁶² In addition, the board hired Ethel Bradbury to assist Shepard with the cataloging. Bradbury was born in Maryland and moved with her family to Watsonville around 1900. Bradbury moved to Santa Cruz by 1905 but was still considered local help. No mention of her profession was listed in the Santa Cruz City Directory.⁶³ Many libraries at this time hired "itinerant librarians" to catalog their collections, so the hiring of Shepard and Bradbury was not unusual.⁶⁴

Jenkins acted most graciously in her capacity as librarian. However, the fact that she was not professionally trained allowed the board to maintain its decision-making role without the objections they might have had from a librarian with a professional degree or experience in collection development. As Dayna Holz explains, "The library board made all of the decisions relating to the library, including the hiring, finances and building maintenance but most importantly, they maintained control over the selection of books for the collection."⁶⁵ Early public libraries were often administered in this manner so the

⁶¹ Library Board of Trustees Secretary's Report. Watsonville, CA. November 1896. Ledger Book, 6 of June 1905.

⁶² San Francisco, California, City Directory, 1903. San Francisco: H. S. Crocker Co.

⁶³ Polk's Santa Cruz (California), City Directory, 1904-05. San Francisco, CA, R. L. Polk and Co. 1906.

⁶⁴ Joanne Passet, "Order is Heaven's First Law: Itinerant Librarians and Bibliographic Control, 1887-1915," *Library Quarterly* (January 1990): 23-43.

⁶⁵ Holz, "The Watsonville Public Library".

Watsonville Library was not unusual in this regard.⁶⁶ The matter of professionalized librarians in regards to their decision-making power and pay will be looked at more closely in chapter four's comparison between Santa Cruz City's library and Watsonville's Library.

Watsonville and the County Library Organizers

While the City of Santa Cruz and other rural areas throughout the county were eager to establish branch libraries supported by county taxes, Watsonville's city officials and residents were quite content with their new library and made little, if no, effort, to create partnerships for library service. In fact, as far as can be determined, the city's historical documents (such as the *Pajaronian* and library board meeting minutes) do not mention Watsonville participating in the development of county branches in the early 1900s. It was not until the 1909 county library legislation that the possibility of a county library system was raised, although it did not become a serious issue in Watsonville for several more years.

At the September 1909 library board meeting, Watsonville librarian Belle Jenkins asked the board members if she could attend the regional district California Library Association meeting in Big Basin.⁶⁷ At this meeting, State Librarian James Gillis and his assistant, Harriet Eddy, were scheduled to discuss the creation of county libraries in Santa Cruz County. Gillis spoke of the new county library law, its background and passage,

⁶⁶Debra G. Hansen, Karen F. Gracy, Sheri D. Irvin, "At the Pleasure of the Board: Women Librarians and the Los Angeles Public Library, 1880-1905", *Libraries and Culture*, 34 (Fall 1999): 311-46.

⁶⁷Watsonville Library Board of Directors, Meeting Minutes, Vol. 2, September 1907-June 1915. WPL Records.

and what the state library was accomplishing to further the goals of county library service. Harriet Eddy also addressed the attendees on how the new law was benefitting schools and the local community. She spoke of her own experiences in county schools and the desire for library service in rural areas.⁶⁸ Gillis and Eddy hoped that this district meeting would be the first of many meetings regarding the implementation of the county library law in California. Representatives from many area libraries were in attendance, including those from Sacramento, Palo Alto, Gilroy, San Mateo, San Jose, and Santa Cruz.⁶⁹ Watsonville librarian, Belle Jenkins, was also in attendance. Thereafter, county library organizer Eddy held several meetings with the Watsonville library board, city officials, and the editors of the *Pajaronian*.⁷⁰

An editorial written in response to Eddy's visit to Watsonville illustrates the fierce independence of the city in relation to county library organizing. Published in the *Pajaronian* on September 29 1909, editors George G. Radcliff and James Piratsky were highly critical of Eddy's recent visit as well as the notion of collaborating with the greater Santa Cruz County area. They were suspicious of the process being proposed and asked why the rush to organize a county system when Watsonville already had its own Carnegie library. The editors also pointed out that the city had its own tax levy in place to support the everyday functions of the library for the sum of \$1200 a year and its library

⁶⁸California State Library, "Second District Meeting," *News Notes of California Libraries*, 4 (1909): 516.

⁶⁹A full list of attendees can be found in *News Notes of California Libraries*, "Second District Meeting," 4 (1909): 516.

⁷⁰Eddy, *County Free Library Organizing in California*, 7.

already made available 4,000 volumes to its local citizens. For these reasons, the editors proposed:

If the Solid Three Supervisors establish a county library system at their next meeting, and we are told they intend to do so, our board of city trustees should at once take advantage of the above provision and notify the supervisors that for the present at least Watsonville will continue to support its own handsome, well equipped library. We can afford to wait and see the new system in working order, and if it is honestly and successfully conducted, we can at any late time secure its advantages. Such application, though, by our trustees, should not be taken except, as provided, on a petition signed by at least one fourth of the local electors.⁷¹

In their editorial, Radcliff and Piratsky questioned the motives of the “solid three” county supervisors: James Linscott, Ralph Miller, and Jacob Hartman. “Now what do you think of permitting three of our supervisors to tax you for the salary of a man and his assistants over whose appointment and tenure of office they should have absolute control? Not alone that, but they are given the power to make rules and regulations regarding the policy of the county library.”⁷² The editors warned that the supervisors had the power to vote themselves to be on the county library committee. They would then have the authority to appoint the new county librarian who would make a salary commensurate with the superintendent of county schools. This smacked of cronyism, they argued, and set the stage for yet another highly paid county official who could make decisions that would not necessarily benefit the citizens of South County. “Such prerogatives might not be abused by a committee of angels,” the editors declared, “but you may be assured that their power would not be overlooked by a committee of the

⁷¹ George Piratsky and James Radcliff. “That County Library,” *Evening Pajaronian*, September 29, 1909.

⁷² Ibid.

Solid Three, even to the extent of making the Watsonville library an adjunct of the Santa Cruz institution.”⁷³

Finally, the editors warned that once the county system was established it would take a two-thirds vote of the electorate to change it back to an independent system. The possibility of being locked into a county system loomed large in the minds of Radcliff and Piratsky, and they cautioned residents to go slowly and observe how the whole affair would unfold:

It seems that the librarian has a good many strings on him. He must please the State Librarian, cooperate with all other librarians, meet the whims of the county committee, attend State Library conventions (at the county's expense) visit the county libraries, and keep within the good graces either of the librarian of the University of California or the Leland Stanford Jr. University. Of course he could afford to use a good deal of policy for the fat salary he would get, but it would prove kind of irksome, especially since he had but two privileges, i.e. he can fire his assistants if he doesn't like them, and if the popular demand for certain books doesn't meet with his austere approval he can compile an index expurgatoris and refuse the libraries permission to get those books.⁷⁴

⁷³ Ibid. James Linscott was the South County representative. Jacob Hartman was County Supervisor for the North County San Lorenzo Valley district. Hartman lived in the valley for twenty years, and owned a hotel and store in Boulder Creek. Ralph Miller was county supervisor for Santa Cruz. Both Miller and Linscott rotated as chair of the board of supervisors during this time. No records have been located that explain what the editors meant by the “Solid Three”, except their chair duties and overall influence. The editors' concern was most likely due to the general mistrust that citizens had of government and business elites during the Progressive Era and the fear that the supervisors would use their power for personal gain. *Sentinel* (Oct 4, 1904); Biographical information for Harman and Miller from *Sentinel* 1905-1935.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Harriet Eddy's meeting with the Watsonville Library Board was equally unsuccessful. In fact, following the discussion, the board sent a letter of protest to the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors.⁷⁵

Eddy was blindsided by the negative response of Watsonville's newspaper and city officials to the county library plan. As she later wrote in her memoir, the town's library and civic leaders "violently opposed a contract which would give the county seat funds to make its library the center of library activity."⁷⁶ As a result of this unpleasant experience, Eddy decided to take a break from meeting with local officials, spending part of her day at the beach in Santa Cruz. She later described the calming effect of watching the waves roll in on a beautiful autumn day which led to some clarity in her thoughts regarding her experiences in Santa Cruz.

After reading the attacking editorial, I returned to Santa Cruz and spent the afternoon on the beach watching waves. My feelings were of course lacerated. Had I left my happy home to be treated like this? Should I chuck it all and go back to the school room? After a while, the waves calmed me and I began to be more objective. I asked myself if I believed in the library plan or in what the paper said. I knew that I believed in equality of opportunity in educational privileges, and that the library, unified, would give one of those chances. I asked myself which was more important, the library or my feelings....The "interview" with the waves ended by my taking my heart from my sleeve and putting it back where it belonged. I gave it a nice little coat of shellac and decided that Santa Cruz was only the first drop in my bucket of experience, and that I'd get on with the job.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Eddy, *County Free Library Organizing in California*, 7.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

After her visit to the beach, Eddy talked things over with Santa Cruz Public Library Trustee Samuel Leask, and they decided to let the matter rest for the time being. However, when Santa Cruz County ultimately established its countywide library system in 1916, Watsonville persisted in its refusal to allow its library to become a county branch.

Watsonville Refuses to Join the Santa Cruz County Library System

As the lengthy *Pajaronian* editorial quoted above suggests, several key factors influenced Watsonville's decision to not join the Santa Cruz County Library System. These factors included local politics and town rivalry, the fear of taxation without representation, and Watsonville's unique economy and demographics. What role did politics play in Watsonville's reluctance to join a broader library system? Most prominent local Watsonville officials, most notably the members of the city's board of alderman, suspected that their city library would not get a fair representation if it joined a larger system that already included the economically and politically powerful City of Santa Cruz. The county library headquarters had been based in Santa Cruz since the early stages of county library organizing, which made the SCPL the favored library in Watsonville's view. As Eddy explained, "As the largest town in the county outside of Santa Cruz, Watsonville violently opposed a contract which would give the county seat funds to make its library the center of library activity."⁷⁸ Furthermore, an editorial written by James Gillis that was published in newspapers across the state including Watsonville's *Pajaronian* and *Sentinel*, reinforced this perception: "A County Free

⁷⁸Eddy, *County Free Library Organizing in California*, p. 7.

Library,” Gillis wrote, “is established with the headquarters at the county seat, and in charge of an experienced librarian.”⁷⁹ This established Santa Cruz Public Library as the more powerful and privileged institution.

Watsonville officials also feared that individuals residing in the city would be double taxed—both as county residents and city residents—for library service that would eventually be substandard to what they currently enjoyed. Their fears were ultimately allayed by County Auditor Willett Ware when he stated that the City of Watsonville was not subject to a tax for county library services and would make no contribution towards the county library fund.⁸⁰

Also contributing to Watsonville’s anti-county library movement was James A. Linscott, a South County supervisor at the time. Born in 1846 and a resident of Santa Cruz since 1866, Linscott was an influential businessman in the area, having built the Eureka Sawmill, the Clipper Mill, and the Eureka Shingle Mill. His firms cut most of the lumber around Corralitos and opened up that area for development. A powerful force in county politics, Linscott’s home was dubbed the “Country Court” because so many deals were made there.⁸¹

Linscott was elected county supervisor in 1890.⁸² He represented South County and was serving as the board of supervisors’ chair when Harriet Eddy toured the county

⁷⁹ “Have You Heard of the California County Free Libraries?” *Sentinel*, September 23, 1911.

⁸⁰ “Watsonville Property Not Taxed for County Library Fund,” *Santa Cruz Evening News*, August 26, 1921.

⁸¹ Author Unknown, “James A. Linscott, Handwritten Biographical Sheet”. Date Unknown, PVHA Collection.

⁸² *Ibid.*

in 1909. Opposed to the county library plan, Linscott, according to Samuel Leask who was on the Santa Cruz library board at that time, used his political clout to convince other county supervisors to give Eddy the cold shoulder. As Leask explained in his personal writings, it was because of Linscott's pressure that in 1909 the county library idea was "definitely and firmly turned down."⁸⁴ Linscott, however, was no longer on the board of supervisors in 1916 when Santa Cruz County decided to form a county library system.

Much of Watsonville's antagonism toward the City of Santa Cruz had deeper roots than concerns over a cooperative library system. As mentioned in chapter one, Watsonville had a long history as an agricultural town because of its fertile land and mild weather.⁸⁵ These conditions led to a constant influx of migrant workers, as they provided a cheap labor force that was seasonal in nature. These early migrant groups included Croatians, Filipinos, Chinese, Japanese, and some Native Americans, many of whom worked and lived in town. While Watsonville relied heavily on its migrant farm worker population, Santa Cruz depended on manufacturing and tourism, which did not employ ethnic workers. These economic and demographic differences created a serious rift between Watsonville and Santa Cruz that would ultimately impact Watsonville's decision regarding the county library.

A good example of this cross-town rivalry was the on-going controversy over the county's Chinese population. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, Santa Cruz

⁸⁴ Leask Family Papers. 1861-2002. Manuscript 2521-2600. Box 2530, Folder 12. CSL.

⁸⁵ Koch, *Santa Cruz County: Parade of the Past*; Lewis, *Watsonville: Memories That Linger*.

residents were very hostile towards the Chinese which culminated in several events that left a lasting impression on the residents of Watsonville. The Chinese already had a difficult time living in the United States in general due to restrictive policies towards them. As local historian Sandy Lydon explains, “National, state and local governments wove a cocoon of legal restrictions around the Chinese immigrant during the nineteenth century. Chinese immigrants were ineligible to become naturalized American citizens, could not testify against whites in California courts, and had to pay special Foreign Miner’s Taxes in the Sierra gold fields.”⁸⁶

The first anti-Chinese organizations in the Monterey Bay area were established in Salinas and Santa Cruz in 1875 and 1877 respectively. In Santa Cruz, the organization grew to 266 members in its first month, making it the largest anti-Chinese organization outside of San Francisco. The editor of the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, Duncan McPherson, was a founding member, and he regularly wrote editorials in the paper critical of the Chinese in the community. “The Chinaman [sic] are an unmitigated curse to the state,” he decried in one editorial. “They have done a thousand times more evil than good.... Chinamen are not citizens in any sense of the word. They do not grant us the miserable boon of letting their heathen carcasses manure our soil, but ship the bones of their dead to the land of Confucius for final internment.”⁸⁷

Watsonville, on the other hand, was more supportive of its Chinese residents. According to local historian Sandy Lydon, “Watsonville dutifully formed a chapter of the

⁸⁶ Sandy Lydon, *Chinese Gold* (Capitola: Capitola Book Company, 1985), 117.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 122.

Workingmen's Party in early 1878, but the group appeared to be going through the motions, even though Watsonville was continually goaded by arch-rival Santa Cruz to demonstrate its anti-Chinese feelings." At one point, Lydon continues, "The anti-Chinese leadership in Santa Cruz proposed an economic boycott of all businesses that employed Chinese directly or indirectly." According to Lydon, Watsonville "exploded." "To drive [the Chinese] from town to town like hunted beasts, and to blacklist those who employ them, is something contrary to that spirit of broad humanity supposed to be characteristic of this great nation which has invited to its shores the poor and downtrodden of all countries....to invite people here and then drive them out is un-American."⁸⁸

In Lydon's view, this controversy had more to do with the "economic differences between Santa Cruz and Watsonville than it did about the Chinese or Chinese immigration." As he explains:

The economy of the Pajaro Valley depended on Chinese muscle in the fields, while the manufacturing interests in and around Santa Cruz used little of any Chinese labor. For Santa Cruz the loss of Chinese labor might mean a little inconvenience in terms of laundries and domestics, but for Watsonville the loss of Chinese labor portended economic ruin.⁸⁹

The cities' rivalry around the Chinese question, among other areas of contention, continued during the Progressive Era, deeply influencing Watsonville's decision not to join Santa Cruz for county library service.

Interestingly, despite Watsonville's continuing opposition to the county library plan, it was not until September 6, 1921, that the Watsonville Library

⁸⁸ Ibid., 123.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Board of Trustees decided to make its disapproval public. The board members also agreed that the county library tax that was currently being applied to the Watsonville School District should be allotted to the Watsonville Public Library and that town's district residents should be able to withdraw books from the city library instead of using the county branch organized through the school district. After reviewing more than fifteen years of board meeting minutes starting with 1909, this was the first time any formal dissention was found. Moreover, although the board discussed making its disapproval public at this meeting, no records can be found in the *Pajaronian* or elsewhere that verifies that this public announcement was made.

Conclusion

Localism was alive and well during the early part of the twentieth century, and local pride, not to mention local self-interest, very much affected Watsonville's ultimate decision to not join the county library system. Unlike larger cities such as Los Angeles, Sacramento, or the Inland Valley's Fresno or Bakersfield, Watsonville, as a small, but prosperous agriculture town, was able to define itself in different ways. While always striving to prove itself as a viable city economically, socially, and politically, Watsonville was more conservative in its approach to "self-fulfillment," to quote local historian Margaret Koch.⁹⁰ The city's residents did not need to align themselves with the current political movement in California to promote civic advancement, in contrast to other California cities and towns during the Progressive Era. Instead, residents wanted very

⁹⁰Koch, *Santa Cruz County*.

much to retain their city's local flavor and, more importantly, local control of their tax base and political decision-making.

A good example of Watsonville's independence and civic pride is its long-standing interest in and support for the public library. Watsonville received early support for reading rooms and small libraries through the efforts of local improvement groups, such as the WCTU, the IOOF, the Watsonville Woman's Club, the Native Daughters of California, and even the Native Sons of the Golden West. Once the public library had been officially established, it continued to garner support from the community in terms of patronage and donations of both books and money.

The citizens of Watsonville had an opportunity in 1909, and again in 1916, to join a broader coalition of libraries throughout the county. Not only did local officials and citizens decline the initial offer from Harriet Eddy and the California State Library, they were most forceful in expressing their negative opinions. Watsonville was highly protective of its local institutions and policies and did not see a great need for input either from the rest of the county or from Sacramento. A strong distrust of larger government entities, including the Sacramento political machine, further reinforced the city's decision to remain a separate library system. Local officials and citizens alike did not trust the political process to ensure a fair tax and representation system or an equal role in determining the direction and purpose of its library.

However, the reasons for refusing to join the county library system go deeper than civic independence. With its long history of agriculture and its migrant workforce, the population of Watsonville has been quite different from Santa Cruz. This led city and

library officials to be acutely aware of the different needs of the people who would use its library. Put simply, the citizens were satisfied with their library and did not see the benefit of merging with the county-wide system.

Chapter 4

County and City Libraries in Santa Cruz County, 1916-1926: A Comparison

As discussed in the previous chapter, there were many reasons why a city like Watsonville would decline an invitation to join a larger county library system. Forces such as local politics and the desire to retain local control over the library's service area were certainly paramount. Concern over county taxes and representation were two others. The differences in city populations also played a role in Watsonville's decision not to merge its library with the county system.

Santa Cruz County was not alone in developing a county library system while retaining independent city libraries. Many other counties throughout California had very similar experiences in the early 1900s, with some counties organizing completely while others, like Santa Cruz, contracting with city libraries to administer its branch libraries. At the same time, some city libraries did not join the county system at all. Monterey, Los Angeles, and San Diego were examples of counties that had both county and city library systems.¹ Given these competing administrative and funding options, two major questions can be raised: What did cities gain and lose by joining a county system? Conversely, what did cities gain and lose by retaining an independent library system?

This chapter will examine data for the libraries in Santa Cruz County from 1916 to 1926 to compare the costs and benefits of the county and city library systems. The first set of tables will examine the funding and administration of the Santa Cruz County

¹California State Library, County Library Files. State Library Records, F3616, Series 19. CSA.

branch libraries, the Santa Cruz City Public Library, and the Watsonville Public Library. The key factors covered in these tables for comparison are number of branches, annual funding, and number of employees. The table for the county system (Table 1) also includes the funding provided by school districts for library services. The second set of tables examines collections and usage, listing number of volumes, number of cardholders, total circulation, and open hours. The data provided in these tables come from *News Notes of California Libraries*, a quarterly publication of the California State Library that started in 1906. Each year, the State Library collected data from library systems throughout California and published summaries of these data in *News Notes*. The head librarian at each location was usually in charge of reporting the annual numbers. In the case of the Santa Cruz City Library, the responsibility fell on librarian Minerva Waterman. Because she was also coordinating the countywide library system, Waterman was in charge of gathering county library statistics as well. Librarian Belle Jenkins was responsible for reporting the statistics for Watsonville Public Library. By examining the statistics for the Santa Cruz libraries in the *News Notes* during the county system's first decade, it is possible to compare how each library fared.

Funding and Staffing

Although the Santa Cruz City Library had its own board of directors and the county system was governed by the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, for all practical purposes, both libraries worked together in providing citywide and countywide service, thus the fitting term of city/county library system of Santa Cruz. This intertwined relationship between the city and county for library services makes it relevant

to discuss statistics for both the County Free Library System and the Santa Cruz City Library as well as for the Watsonville City Library in this chapter.

Table 1. Santa Cruz County Free Library Funding and Staffing

Year	Number of Branches	Total Funding	Number of Employees	School Dist. Funding Portion
1916	2	\$900.00	2	...
1917	2	\$2000.00	2	...
1918	70	\$4696.16	4	\$400
1919	70	\$3466.33	5	\$1641
1920	84	\$3000.00	44	...
1921	83	\$6890.30	8	\$4335.25
1922	83	\$5840.75	14	\$2615
1923	87	\$5812.64	14	\$2600
1924	91	\$5882.14	38	\$2590
1925	92	\$8500.32	19	\$3110
1926	87	\$8892.02	19	\$3185

Source: News Notes of California Libraries, California State Library, Vols. 11-21.

As discussed in Chapter 2, a provision of the 1911 county library law allowed individual cities to contract directly with the county for branch library services. As a result, two county branches were established prior to the official start of the Santa Cruz County Library System in 1916, the Ben Lomond branch in 1911 and the Soquel branch in 1913. This explains why statistics in Table 1 only exist for these two branches in 1916 and 1917. Thereafter, Table 1 shows statistics for the many other localities that quickly took advantage of the opportunity to establish a county library branch in their community.

Initially, the county gave \$2000 for the general Library Fund of the Santa Cruz County Library. Once the city/county library system and its library headquarters were established within the City of Santa Cruz Public Library, the county paid \$1000 in

January and \$1000 in July of 1917 to support the fledgling county system. The Santa Cruz City Library then administered the funds to support county branches such as Ben Lomond and Soquel.²

The population of Santa Cruz County in 1916 was 26,140, with a countywide taxable assessed value by the State of California at \$18,276,530.³ This amount mattered for the county library system because it determined how much money the county could raise for library services each year. As Table 1 shows, in 1918 the number of branches and total funding increased substantially as a result of the county's school districts joining the library system to provide books for both students and the local population. The school districts would eventually create their own library system, but for this decade, the county library and school districts worked together to bring service throughout the county.

After the initial surge in branch libraries in 1918, the number of county branches remained fairly stable, reaching its peak of ninety-two in 1925. However, these statistics are somewhat misleading as a majority of these branches lasted only a short time, and most were supported by volunteers and did not take any money from the county funds. In 1921, for example, ten branches were established and eleven branches were discontinued. This pattern was typical over the years and shows the ever-changing nature of the county branches and the challenge of keeping some branches open over time.⁴

² Santa Cruz Library Board of Trustees, Meeting Minutes, November 6, 1916, pp. 39-40. SCPL.

³ *News Notes of California Libraries*, 11 (January 1916): 186.

⁴ *News Notes of California Libraries* 16 (October 1921): 725.

As evidenced in the annual income column in Table 1, county library funding increased most years and enabled a steady flow of books and staff. An important factor regarding the county library funding was the money given by various school districts to participate in the new county library system. For example, in 1919, the county contributed \$1825.33 from taxes plus an additional \$1641 from county school districts for a total of \$3466.33. The amount of money that the school districts contributed was not reported each year, hence the missing data for some years in the table. Moreover, like most public institutions, in some years school districts were able to give more money, while in other years they contributed less, although the amount of money given by the school districts did increase most years. In fact, in 1921, the school districts provided more funding than the county in support of branch libraries. The average amount during the time period of study was \$3100.

The number of branch library employees fluctuated quite drastically, peaking at forty-four in 1920 as many schools now had branches. The data reported for the year 1921 does not include county branch employees but only those employees who worked within Santa Cruz City limits. No other county employee numbers were reported to the California State Library that year which accounts for the large discrepancy. The total numbers of county employees was much the same as in previous and subsequent years.

Table 2. Santa Cruz City Library: Funding and Staffing

Year	Number of Branches	Funding	Number of Employees
1916	3	\$4500	4
1917	4	\$6016.54	4
1918	4	\$6989.52	4
1919	4	\$7884.12	4
1920	4	\$7021.00	5
1921	4	\$10,179.42	5
1922	5	\$8875.24	7
1923	4	\$7962.78	7
1924	5	\$8330.87	9
1925	4	\$9303.89	9
1926	4	\$8481.51	9

Source: News Notes of California Libraries, California State Library, Vols. 11-21.

As previously explained, the Santa Cruz City Library received money from the county to administer the county and school branches. The city library also received money from the city for the maintenance of the city library and its four city branches. The library's annual budget shown in Table 2 was drawn from funds from taxation based on the dollar on the assessed value of city property. The data shows that the city library's annual budget fluctuated modestly each year, though generally increasing over the decade. The library's funding peaked at over \$10,000 in 1921 due to the assessed property values of the city that year. The number of employees was steady and increased along with the budget, doubling over the first decade. The number of branches for the Santa Cruz City Library also remained consistent at four during this period, although in 1922 and 1925 a fifth branch—the seasonal Casino Branch—opened in the summer for the many tourists who visited the area.

Table 3. Watsonville Public Library: Funding and Staffing

Year	Number of Branches	Funding	Number of Employees
1916	1	\$1030	3
1917	1	\$1030	3
1918	1	\$2044.27	3
1919	1	\$2134.97	3
1920	1	\$2461.00	3
1921	1	\$2407.62	3
1922	1	\$2888.60	3
1923	1	\$3368.13	3
1924	1	\$3533.59	3
1925	1	\$3395.20	3
1926	1	\$4802.94	3

Source: News Notes of California Libraries, California State Library, Vols. 11-21.

As Table 3 shows, by remaining independent from the county library system, Watsonville maintained its lone Carnegie branch which served all residents in the city. In 1916, the City of Watsonville levied a tax on property values throughout the city which provided the library with an income of \$1030.⁵ As property values increased so did the annual budget for the library which enabled it to purchase more items and maintain the facility. Like the Santa Cruz Public Library, the number of employees at Watsonville's library also remained consistent during this time and included the head librarian, an assistant, and the custodian.

Not listed in the Watsonville Library statistics, but relevant to the geography of the area, were the branches of Amesti, established November 18, 1916; Casserly, established March 21, 1917; and the Green Valley, established on November 22, 1916.

⁵“1916 Report of Public Library,” *Pajaronian*, July 8, 1916.

These were county-supported branches that served residents of the Pajaro Valley. The Pajaro Valley includes the communities of Amesti, Casserly and Corralitos as well as the many surrounding farmlands. The City of Watsonville is also located within the greater valley area. Statistics regarding these three branches were not reported separately to the state library but were combined with the county library statistics. With three county branches as well as the Watsonville City Library, for a brief time, Pajaro Valley residents had more options for library service in their immediate area.

Perhaps the most glaring difference when comparing tables 1-3 is the annual income for each library system. While the budget for each system increased in most years, by 1918 the Santa Cruz City/County System had more than five times the budget as the Watsonville Public Library. This allowed the Santa Cruz City/County System to purchase more items, hire more employees, and maintain their facilities on a level that Watsonville was not able to accomplish. The income that each library system was able to garner had to do with two main factors: the population of each area and the taxation rates that city/county officials imposed. The population of Santa Cruz County in 1910 was 26,140, in 1920 it was 26,269, and in 1930 it was 37,433.⁶ The population of Santa Cruz City was 11,146 in 1910, 10,417 in 1920, and 14,395 in 1930.⁷ In comparison, the population of Watsonville City was 4,446 in 1910, 5,013 in 1920, and 8,344 in 1930.⁸ Since library funding was based on taxation, it is clear that the more populated county and city of Santa Cruz could provide a larger annual income for the library.

⁶United States Census Bureau. www.census.gov.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

The tax rate agreed upon by each municipality also played a role in the amount of operating funds available for each library system. The residents of Watsonville approved .4 mills on the dollar of assessed property value in the city limits. The residents of Santa Cruz, on the other hand, agreed upon a tax rate of .75 mills on the dollar while the county used .5 mills on the dollar and excluded property owners in the City of Santa Cruz and Watsonville. Therefore, the population density of each area plus the difference in agreed- upon tax rates account for the greater budget for the Santa Cruz City/County Library system as compared to the Watsonville Public Library. In addition, the county library was also able to secure additional funding from local school districts which substantially increased the system's resources. As a result, both the Santa Cruz County Library and Santa Cruz City Library had substantially higher funding than Watsonville's library. In fact, by 1926 the Santa Cruz City Library enjoyed nearly twice the operating budget as Watsonville.

Another glaring difference between the Santa Cruz City/County Library System and the Watsonville Public Library is the number of branches. By leveraging its funds, the county system was able to create a significant number of branches that served a wide area of the population. While many of these county branches came and went, the County Free Library System was able to accomplish what it set out to do; it created a countywide system that served as many patrons as possible, given the rugged geography of the county. Particularly noteworthy were the many school-based branches established as part of the county library system, which served local residents as well. With only the main

library branch, Watsonville simply could not compete with the level of service that the county system provided.

Another telling effect of the divergence in funding is the number of employees each system hired. During the time period examined, the Watsonville Public Library was only able to hire three staff members, while the staffing levels for both the Santa Cruz County and the city libraries experienced steady growth. The smaller staff in Watsonville made it more difficult for its librarian to expand the library's services, such as community outreach and programming for children.

Collections and Usage

News Notes of California Libraries also published statistics on library collections and usage, providing more insight into the different trajectories of the county and city library systems. Table 4 shows the steady increase in the county library system's use, although the number of books remained stable throughout the period. Unfortunately, the number of volumes listed in column two represents only the holdings of three county branches – Ben Lomond, Boulder Creek, and Soquel – as no statistical data were reported for the school district branches which made up the majority of county branches during the decade. Therefore, complete data for county library holdings is unavailable.

Table 4. Santa Cruz County Free Library: Collections and Usage

Year	Volumes	Cardholders	Circulation	Open Hours
1916	3261	688	11,749	9 a.m-9 p.m. daily except Sunday
1917	2783	704	18,686	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
1918	3119	944	13,599	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
1919	2119	1105	14,599	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
1920	2500	1394	15,241	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
1921	2000	1723	16,640	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
1922	2000	1877	17,710	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
1923	2520	2037	19,100	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
1924	...	...	...	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
1925	2500	2266	21,100	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
1926	2500	2482	23,100	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Source: News Notes of California Libraries, California State Library, Vols. 11-21.

However, the county branches had access to all of the books at the different branches as well as the Santa Cruz Public Library and the number of shipments of materials between branches was reported to the State Library for most years. These shipments provide a sense of the access to books enjoyed by county residents who wanted specific items shipped to their local branch. In 1920, for example, 11,684 items were sent between the county library's branches.⁹ This number would grow to 20,962 by 1929 and would continue to increase each year thereafter.¹⁰

Statistics for countywide cardholders were not recorded separately from the Santa Cruz Public Library until 1923, so the number of cardholders listed in Table 4 from 1916 through 1922 represents the county branches of Soquel, Boulder Creek, and Ben

⁹ *News Notes of California Libraries* 15 (October 1917): 794.

¹⁰ *News Notes of California Libraries* 24 (October 1929): 449.

Lomond. However, the data that is available indicates a steady increase in library usage each year. Circulation figures between 1916 and 1926 similarly show a steady increase in usage of the county branches, almost doubling over the ten-year period. These numbers demonstrate that county library users were taking advantage of the new county system and availing themselves of the many resources provided by the branch libraries at the time. The new county library plan was working according to the original intent of the law in that more and more rural residents had a greater access to materials for the first time.

The open hours reported by the county system to the State Library show hours of operation as being from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. each day. However, many branches had much shorter hours, as the report encompassed the combined open hours of all county branches rather than single libraries. Because most of the branches were run by volunteers, their open hours varied greatly depending upon the volunteers' availability. Some branches had more consistent hours, such as the Ben Lomond and Soquel locations. Ben Lomond was open three afternoons and three evenings per week. The Soquel branch was open three afternoons and two evenings per week.

Table 5. Santa Cruz City Library: Collections and Usage

Year	Volumes	Cardholders	Circulation	Open Hours
1916	25,380	2012	17,505	9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily except Sunday
1917	27,000-28,392	...	105,040	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
1918	30,813	3967	102,266	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
1919	34,418	2079	88,074	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
1920	38,148	2125	110,056	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
1921	41,985	4259	151,067	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
1922	46,300	4158	167,710	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
1923	51,027	4731	169,496	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
1924	54,480	4831	166,721	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
1925	59,719	5596	177,514	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
1926	63,173	5255	167,180	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Source: News Notes of California Libraries, California State Library, Vols. 11-21.

As shown in Table 5, the Santa Cruz City Library had over 25,000 volumes when it joined the county library system, and by the end of the first decade its holdings had almost tripled. This impressive growth in collections derived from the library's increasing budget and its larger staff to handle acquisitions. The number of Santa Cruz Library cardholders also grew at a healthy rate between 1916 and 1926, more than doubling during this time. Particularly impressive was the dramatic increase in circulation from 17,505 items to 167,180 items checked out by patrons each year, illustrating the combined impact of the library's annual budget, the number of volumes, and staff to circulate those items. In addition, the Santa Cruz City Library was open for twelve hours daily, another factor enabling patrons to use the library on a regular and predictable basis.

Table 6. Watsonville Public Library: Collections and Usage

Year	Volumes	Cardholders	Circulation	Open Hours
1916	7500	700	6266	Weekdays: 12:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.; 7 p.m.-9 p.m.; Sundays: 2 p.m.-5 p.m.
1917	7673	1242	25,136	Branch hours were the same for all years in table.
1918	8353	1604	26,421	
1919	8694	1871	21,577	
1920	9018	...	26,041	
1921	9327	2429	33,274	
1922	9673	2530	32,864	
1923	9670	2630	47,215	
1924	10,135	1404	31,779	
1925	10,661	2527	33,783	
1926	11,323	2352	36,629	

Source: News Notes of California Libraries, California State Library, Vols. 11-21.

Table 6 demonstrates that the Watsonville Public Library also enjoyed significant growth and increasing popularity during the decade studied. As with the other library systems, Watsonville's holdings increased every year, though at a much more modest rate because of the library's smaller annual budget. Also impacting collection development was the libraries' limited staff to do acquisitions while handling the many other responsibilities.

Perhaps in response to the beginnings of the county library system, in January 1916 the Watsonville library requested that its cardholders re-register for the first time

since 1896.¹¹ This most likely accounted for the dramatic increase in library cardholders the following year. Thereafter, as Table 6 shows, the number of library users increased steadily, despite the presence of the new countywide system, with the number of cardholders more than tripling over the decade. The circulation totals also show a significant expansion in library usage, with a six fold increase between 1916 and 1926.¹² Also as with the Santa Cruz Public Library, Watsonville's open hours remained consistent from 1916 to 1926. The library was open weekdays from 12:30 p.m. until 5 p.m. and from 7p.m. to 9 p.m. The library was also open on Sundays from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

As Tables 4-6 show, both the county and city library systems experienced significant growth in collections and usage between 1916 and 1926. However, because the combined population of Santa Cruz City and Santa Cruz County was much greater than Watsonville's, the latter had less tax money to purchase books and hire staff to process them. On the other hand, the Watsonville Public Library served a smaller geographic area than the City/County Library System and therefore did not need the same level of recourses. But the fact remains that patrons of the Santa Cruz City/County Library System were able to access a much wider range of material. This disparity became more pronounced as the decade progressed, particularly when the city libraries are compared. Between 1916 and 1926 Santa Cruz City Library's collection increased by nearly 60 percent while Watsonville's collection increased by less than 34 percent. By

¹¹ *News Notes of California Libraries* 11 (April 1916): 478.

¹² Although there appears to have been a significant increase in circulation from 1916 to 1917, this data probably reflects inaccurate record keeping of library staff. Circulation data gathered from *News Notes of California Libraries* 11-21.

1926, the City/County Library System had almost six times the total volumes as the Watsonville Library.

The number of cardholders presented in the tables is especially telling. Despite its smaller collection, Watsonville had a higher percentage of registered users than the county branches and about an equal percentage to the number of cardholders of the Santa Cruz City Library. For example, in 1925 the population of Watsonville was roughly 6,000 and the library had 2,527 registered users. This meant that roughly 40 percent of the town residents had a library card. In comparison, Santa Cruz County had 26,140 residents and approximately 8,000 countywide cardholders, representing about 30 percent of county residents. For the City of Santa Cruz Library, there were 5596 cardholders in 1925, and a city population of 12,000, which equates to 42 percent of the population. In the two cities, then, there seems to have been equal level of library usage and interest among their residents.

The number of cardholders continued to grow for each system, thus providing additional evidence of the continuing high level of interest in libraries within each community. Between 1916 and 1926, Watsonville's cardholders rose from 700 to 2,352, an increase of over 70 percent. During the same time period, the number of county cardholders increased by 72 percent while the cardholders of the Santa Cruz Public Library increased by 61 percent. Clearly, more and more citizens were finding the library to be relevant to their lives as the steady increase in cardholders makes clear.

Circulation data shown in tables 4, 5, and 6, however, show some disparities in library usage, as yearly circulation was much higher for the Santa Cruz City/County

system than the Watsonville library. For example, in 1923, 2,630 cardholders of the Watsonville Public Library checked out a total of 47,215 items. This is an average of 18 items checked out per year by every cardholder in Watsonville. The combined circulation of Santa Cruz County Free Library and the Santa Cruz City Library cardholders equaled 188,596. The number of cardholders countywide was 6,768 which equaled an average of 27 circulations per year per borrower.

Administration

In addition to the data collected by the California State Library, another useful means to compare the city and county library systems is the way in which each system was administered during this time. Both library systems had a board of directors or board of trustees that made administrative and financial decisions pertaining to staffing, acquisitions, maintenance, etc. Both library boards were advocates for their respective systems in relation to the city council or board of aldermen, as Watsonville officials were called. Both also negotiated with the city councils and mayors as to the amount of tax on the dollar that would go towards the library's operating budget. The similarities, however, end here.

First and foremost, the Watsonville Public Library included only one level or one main decision-making body for library-related activities, the library's board of directors. The board did work with the city's board of aldermen, mostly in terms of the library's tax-based funding. Otherwise, the library board was relatively autonomous in making decisions for the library. Another unique aspect of the Watsonville library administration was the fact that between 1916 and 1926 the board of directors was made

up entirely of women: Mrs. Abbie Morehead, Mrs. Alice J. Wilson, Jean Steinhauser, and Mrs. Charlotte Bockius. Abbie Morehead was an original member of the Watsonville WCTU and Charlotte Bockius served on the library board for forty years. Alice J. Wilson's husband, Arthur Wilson, founded the Granite Rock Company and her family was involved in community activities such as the library board.¹³ Jean Steinhauser's family were co-owners of the Steinhauser and Eaton Drug Store on Main St.¹⁴

With a single decision-making body that was small, cohesive, and of relatively high social status, the Watsonville library's administrative process was more efficient in terms of workload and timeliness. Board members were able to quickly assess the situation—whether staffing, collection development, or facility management—and provide solutions in a timely manner. For example, a discussion was held by the board on July 6, 1915, regarding the need to temporarily replace Jenkins's assistant, Lucy Bliss, who had to leave town suddenly. The board agreed at the same meeting to hire Mary Kirkland until Bliss returned.¹⁵ Another decision that was made quickly and efficiently was a discussion around open hours. There was a need to increase hours on Sundays, so the board decided to reduce hours on Saturday evening and extend hours to every Sunday instead of every other Sunday. The board also agreed to open earlier on weekdays to accommodate the new schedule.¹⁶

¹³ "Jeffery Wilson Dies in Sonora," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, October 22, 1957.

¹⁴ *Santa Cruz County Directory, 1916-1917* (Santa Cruz, CA: Santa Cruz Directory Company, 1916).

¹⁵ Watsonville Library Board. Meeting Minutes, July 6, 1915. WPL Records.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, November 2, 1915.

Although the Watsonville Public Library enjoyed a more efficient, cohesive, and localized administrative structure, it lacked political clout as compared to the city/county library system. Watsonville's vote on any county library issues was minimized because of its independent stance. This fact was not lost on Watsonville's city and library officials, and the South County supervisor that represented the city supported Watsonville's interests in a strong way. A fitting example occurred at a December 1916 library board meeting. The board decided to ask the city's county supervisor, Samuel Marcus, to ascertain whether tax funds given to the Ben Lomond and Soquel county branches were coming from the general county fund or from special taxes that should be used to support the Watsonville library. Marcus met with his fellow supervisors and the district attorney. He returned the following month with news that Watsonville was not being taxed for county library service and would therefore need to wait until the following year to see if any funds would be available for the Watsonville library.¹⁷

The Santa Cruz City/County Library System, on the other hand, had a multilayered administrative body that included both a library board of trustees and a county board of supervisors. The Santa Cruz Library Board of Trustees retained most of the decision-making power over library functions, but the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors expected a quarterly report from librarian Minerva Waterman and helped make financial decisions regarding county and school district branches. In addition to these two administrative bodies was the Santa Cruz City Council, which supported the library in many ways over the years. As library board chairman Leask stated in a 1924

¹⁷ Watsonville Library Board. Meeting Minutes, December 1916, WPL Records.

newspaper article on the “City’s Helpful Attitude”:

. . . it was worth chronicling that the city government had always assumed a helpful, encouraging part toward the public library administration. True today, it was true even in the old days, long before the present charter, when the library trustees were elected by the people and when the mayor and city council had no power of appointment or removal yet had to furnish them with the money required to conduct the library.¹⁸

This article gave Santa Cruz Mayor, J. B. Maher, particular credit for the city’s on-going library support:

He too was familiar with the library’s early history for in a way he helped to make it. He was a member of the council at the time the library graduated from a spare room in the city hall to quarters in the new Hotaling Building. There was some complaint against such an ambitious move but Mr. Maher said he was glad to be able to say that he endorsed it at the time and voted increased appropriations needed.¹⁹

Not only did the Santa Cruz City/County Library System have multiple administrative bodies, its stakeholders were spread across a larger geographic area which made it more difficult to achieve consensus. A telling example is the length of time it took for all stakeholders to decide on a county contract. Harriet Eddy first visited the county in 1909, and it wasn’t until 1916 that all interested parties could agree on the language, terminology, and contract law that would satisfy their constituencies’ needs.

As noted above, city/county library board of trustees was mostly male compared to the all-female board of Watsonville. The county board of supervisors was entirely male, and the Santa Cruz City Council was entirely male as well. Over a ten year period, council members included: J. T. Jones, P. C. Morrissey, C. E. Canfield, S. A. Palmer,

¹⁸ “City’s Helpful Attitude,” *Santa Cruz Evening News*, July 15, 1924.

¹⁹ Ibid.

C. E. Greenfield, Frank Stikeman, Frank Mattison, J. A. Pilkington, Fred Royse, Clarence Fette, George Pratchner, Charles Balzari, George Gray, U. M. Thompson, and Noel Patterson. These men were all involved with making library decisions during the ten-year period although the library board of trustees and county supervisors made the majority of decisions. It can be argued that since all decision-making bodies were comprised entirely of men, that they were slightly out of touch with the everyday working lives of the many women who staffed the county's libraries. Without a more intimate knowledge of how libraries were run at the branch level, the several boards ran the risk of making uninformed decisions that may have benefited their positions more than the library employees'.

Another complicating factor of a multilayered county system occurred when a community requested a branch library in its neighborhood. Many people were involved in establishing a new county branch, including the original petitioners, county supervisors, library board of trustees, library staff, and the city council. The requested branch went through a moderately lengthy process during which all stakeholders provided input. As discussed in chapter 2, several branches came to fruition through this process, such as Boulder Creek, Ben Lomond, and Soquel. Other requested branches were not approved as it only required one stakeholder to withdraw its support for the project to fall apart. For example, residents from Aptos, Skyland, and Highland requested permanent county branch libraries for their communities. Ultimately, however, these branches were not created, and library service was provided by the local school library. These school-based branches were also short-lived and were later

incorporated into the county school district system.²⁰

A final factor influencing the city/county library administration was its relationship to the California State Library. While not many public records exist containing correspondence between Santa Cruz and Sacramento, the new Santa Cruz City County Library System was expected to follow the requirements of the 1911 county library law and follow State Library-mandated procedures. For instance, the county library board via Minerva Waterman was required to make quarterly reports to the State Library. Librarian Waterman also had to take an exam and be certified by the State Board of Library Examiners to qualify for the county librarian position. Lastly, Waterman and board members were expected to attend county library regional conferences in central and northern California.²¹

Public Support

Another interesting point of comparison of the two library systems is the public sentiment regarding libraries as both expressed in and promoted by the local newspapers—the *Santa Cruz Evening News*, the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, and Watsonville’s *Pajaronian*. The following excerpts, while not exhaustive, provide a window into how residents were informed about their library services and how public opinion was shaped by these regular reports.

A 1916 editorial in the *Santa Cruz Evening News*, for instance, expressed the

²⁰Data pertaining to the school districts libraries can be found in *News Notes of California Libraries*, 11-21, (1916-1926).

²¹Minutes of the Meetings of the Santa Cruz Library Board of Trustees, November 6, 1916, pp. 39-40. SCPL.

newspaper's support for the proposed countywide system and articulated the importance of libraries to residents more generally. Arguing that the public library was one of the most important institutions in the community, the editor wrote, "It has come to be so that the public library is a standard by which a homeseeker measures the intelligence of the community, just as the schools are a standard." The newspaper used the occasion to advocate for the county library system as well:

The editor of this paper has an acquaintance extending over many years with men and women engaged in this work, and was pleased to hear from them compliments upon the progress made by the Santa Cruz public library. Coupled with these compliments were hopes that this work would be permitted to grow, and that the supervisors would extend library advantages to the residents of all the outlying districts of the county.²²

Five years later, the editor of the *Santa Cruz Evening Sentinel* voiced similar praise for what was now the city/county library system, noting in particular the expansion of branches which made library services available to a more diverse population:

It is good to know that the new East Side branch library, at the intersection of Soquel Avenue and Water streets has been opened to the public. It is pointed out by the library authorities that the branch libraries, of which there are three in the city limits—one at Garfield Park, one at Seabright, and this newly opened branch—do much to spread library benefits, since many old or infirm people cannot conveniently go to the main library on Church street for their books. It might be added that many who are neither old nor infirm, but who live in the outlying districts, often do not have the time to go to the main library, and these also are served by the branches.²³

Several years later, the local newspapers were continuing to publish articles and editorials in support of the city/county library system, taking the opportunity to indulge in

²² "Keep Up The Good Work", *Sana Cruz Evening News*, July 31, 1916.

²³ "Another Branch Library Opens," *Santa Cruz Evening Sentinel*, September 24, 1921.

a bit of local pride and competition. In an article published in the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* in 1924, long-time library trustee Samuel Leask praised the people of Santa Cruz for their voracious reading. Using data presented in *News Notes of California Libraries*, Leask opined, “From all information available, it would appear that Santa Cruz people are the greatest readers in the state of California, the circulation of books for home reading being out of all proportion to the populations.” Leask then compared Santa Cruz to surrounding cities and their respective library services:

In this connection a few comparisons are of interest. San Jose with an income from taxes of \$16,500 and a population over three times that of Santa Cruz circulated for home reading last year 115,806 books and magazines, while Santa Cruz with an income from city taxes of about \$7000 circulated over 151,000 books for home reading....San Jose has a collection of 26,450 volumes, Santa Cruz has over 51,000 volumes.²⁴

Leask concludes the article with a not-so-subtle request for additional library funding:

The management of the library has been almost parsimonious in its expenditures, and had to be, in order to keep things going and hold expenditures within available income. The librarian has labored and planned and worried over her problem to an extent that should not be demanded of any public employee. The trouble lies in the insatiable demand of the people for books and more books.²⁵

Between 1916 and 1926, Watsonville’s newspaper, the *Evening Pajaronian*, similarly kept residents informed of their public library’s progress and its important role in the community. On May 18, 1917, a large celebration for the laying of the cornerstone of the Watsonville Woman’s Club provided one such occasion. In addressing the crowd, the newspaper reported the remarks of charter member Ellen Cox on the club’s important

²⁴ Samuel Leask, “Santa Cruz People Are Among The Greatest Readers in the State: Some Interesting Comparisons,” *Santa Cruz Evening News*, June 14, 1924.

²⁵ Ibid.

role in founding the Watsonville Public Library:

Eighteen years ago, a movement was inaugurated in this community that has meant much in the lives of the individual women of this community and we trust, in the life of our town. The origin of an institution is always interesting. Why was this club formed? At the time there were living among us two women, women of high ideals and broad culture who had come from our universities and who had lived in places of wider social opportunities—intellectual and social opportunities. They realized the need for themselves and for us of a wider mental and social horizon than any of our institutions afforded²⁶

The newspaper goes on to explain how the women's club "fostered" the library during its formative period:

On February 18, 1899, eighteen years ago, these ladies with other interested ones met in the high school to affect their permanent organization. The constitution was read and adopted with minor changes. The object of the organization was two-fold. First the literary improvement and social advancement of its members and second the benefit of the public library. To attain higher growth ourselves and to help those around us by helping the library, these were our ideals.²⁷

Several years later the *Pajaronian* used its coverage of the library's 1920/1921 annual report to publicize the library's progress as well as to advocate for additional funding:

Several necessary improvements have been made during the year. The children's room had become so greatly over-crowded that it was necessary to enlarge it by removing the partition into the work room. Several additions have been made to the book shelves to make room for new books, but more is needed. Attention is called in particular to the increased circulation of books as shown in the librarian's report. There was an average monthly circulation throughout the year of nearly twenty eight hundred books. This has made necessary constant replacement of popular books. Books have been added as funds permitted, but an

²⁶ "Corner Stone Is Laid For Clubhouse," *Evening Pajaronian*, May 19, 1917.

²⁷ Ibid.

increased fund for this purpose is urgently required.²⁸

Without the level of public support from the community, and library users in particular, the Watsonville and Santa Cruz Libraries would not have progressed in the way that they did. The myriad women's groups, library boards, community groups, and city councils were determined that the library had the best funding possible in order to grow and serve the many needs of Santa Cruz County residents. The library during this time was truly a product of its citizen's involvement and patronage which is evidenced by the ever increasing statistics shown in tables 1 through 6.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the development and impact of the county library system on libraries throughout Santa Cruz County. The data presented in the tables, as well as quotes from the local newspapers, show the steady expansion of libraries in both systems and their popularity among the residents. The libraries' registered users and circulation figures increased every year, evidence of the expanding interest in library services throughout the county. County and city officials also proved their ongoing support with annual increases in tax-supported library funding. Newspapers as well expressed their approval of the local libraries, using editorials and articles to keep the public apprised of the libraries' advances and needs. In light of this overall satisfaction with library services in the county, what were the benefits of joining the county library

²⁸ "Annual Report of Watsonville Library," *Pajaronian*, July 7, 1921.

system as compared to remaining an independent library? Conversely, what were the negative aspects of these competing library systems?

The statistics from tables 1 through 6 show a fairly large discrepancy between the two systems, with the county system providing significantly broader service to its residents. With branches established throughout even the most remote areas of the county, the Santa Cruz City/County Library System had strength in numbers. This included the number of employees as well as numerous library board members, city and county officials, and private citizens all collaborating for optimal library service. The county system's larger budget provided more money for acquisitions, facilities, and staff. In addition, county residents were no longer dependent on their local branch for service. They could borrow items from multiple locations and return items to multiple locations. The county system also enjoyed additional support from the California State Library, such as borrowing rare items or consulting with state library organizers on county library administration.²⁹ With a larger library staff, librarians also had more opportunity to network and support each other, and attendance at professional meetings and county library conferences was paid for by the county budget rather than the library budget.³⁰

However, there were some negative features of the county library system. The system's multilevel administrative structure complicated decision-making and included

²⁹ "Two Questions Often Asked," State Library Pamphlet 1911, CSA; Harriet Eddy also mentions the support provided to county libraries by the state library organizers in *County Free Library Organizing in California*, 19-27.

³⁰ "County Library Contract between Santa Cruz Board of Trustees and County Supervisors," in Santa Cruz Library Board of Trustees, Meeting Minutes, November 6, 1916, pp. 39-40. SCPL.

more bureaucracy and increased potential for conflict. Branches were spread across a wide geographic area, including the Santa Cruz Mountains, making communication difficult and requiring librarian Minerva Waterman to spend much time traveling to the system's dispersed branches. On occasion, localism and jealousy also impeded the coordination of the county system as county supervisors competed for their own constituencies. Although the different localities agreed to the county contract in order to host a branch, individual communities fought to make sure their branch received equitable resources in terms of open hours, staff, and books. Finally, the county library system was also part of the statewide county library program, which added an additional layer of bureaucracy to its administrative system.

As the data shows, the Watsonville Public Library could not compete with a larger county system in terms of its annual income, facilities, number of volumes, and circulated items. Although Watsonville's collection grew steadily over the years, the library gave up an opportunity to have access to a larger collection of books by not cooperating with the county system. A particularly telling point of comparison is the libraries' staffing. From 1916 until 1930, the number of staff for the Watsonville Library remained the same, while the Santa Cruz City/County System added up to 44 employees over the same time period. Watsonville's librarian, Belle Jenkins, was also paid less than her Santa Cruz counterpart, Minerva Waterman, as well as other surrounding county librarians.³¹ While the Watsonville library board approved Jenkins's attendance at professional

³¹ According to the Watsonville Library's Board Meeting Minutes for 1919, in that year Belle Jenkins monthly salary was \$55.67 while the Santa Cruz Library Board Minutes recorded the monthly salary for Minerva Waterman at \$100.00.

conferences and meetings, the expenses were paid out of the library's budget, not the county's budget.³² This restricted her attendance at meetings as well as opportunities to train and network.

So what did the City of Watsonville gain from its refusal to join a larger county system? Independence from state and county decision-makers allowed the library's officials to determine how the library should be run based on local needs. With a smaller and cohesive board of prominent local women, the library's administrators and lone librarian knew their constituents well and how best to serve them. The library board along with the librarian made choices on what items to purchase for their patrons; input from library patrons was also taken into account regarding which purchases to make. With a smaller group of stakeholders, decision-making was more personal and less bureaucratic. Finally, the independent Watsonville Public Library gave the community a greater sense of civic pride and an institution that was more to scale with how Watsonville looked at the time—a smaller, more agricultural town, not quite as busy and urban as Santa Cruz.

³² Watsonville Library Board. Meeting Minutes, Vol. 2, September 1907-June 1915. WPL Records.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The Progressive Era was a time of significant change and reform within government and governmental agencies throughout the United States and California in particular. California State Librarian James Gillis and his staff in Sacramento embraced the reform ideals of the early 1900s and used their energy to propose major changes in library organization and administration at both the state and local levels. Gillis's overarching goal was to bring more books to more people living in rural areas throughout the state. After experimenting unsuccessfully with a traveling library program, Gillis proposed a statewide library model based on the county school district system, and California's county library plan was born.

Complicating Gillis's ambitious plan, however, was the fact that many California cities and towns had already established an independent public library. In Santa Cruz County, for example, women's clubs, including the WCTU, Daughters of the Golden West and the Watsonville Woman's Club held fundraisers for the purchase of books which were donated to the local library. These civic groups also raised funds towards the purchase of new library buildings. Early literary societies sprung up throughout the county in support of reading for recreation and self-improvement. Many local residents in Santa Cruz, Watsonville and the more rural communities donated countless hours in creating their town reading rooms or small lending libraries. This enthusiasm was fueled by local pride and was ultimately rewarded with funds given by the Carnegie Corporation to build several beautiful, well-loved libraries in the county. The early interest and

enthusiasm for books and reading were instrumental in the development of the county's early libraries and would continue to exist well into the future.

Given the investment communities like those in Santa Cruz County had already made in creating a town library, the implementation of a large county library system became quite politicized, requiring the support and cooperation many stakeholders, including the county board of supervisors, city officials, and interested community groups. Not only did the county system need local political backing, it also depended upon town librarians and library staff, who were predominantly women, to make the system work. To promote his county library plan, Gillis sent library organizers, such as Harriet Eddy, across the state to explain the idea to various community members and secure their financial and political support. The success of the state library's promotional efforts is evidenced by the fact that by Gillis's death in 1917, thirty-eight counties had established a countywide library system.² County library organizing in Santa Cruz County typified the complex political process of establishing a county library within California. State library organizer Harriet Eddy traveled to Santa Cruz County in 1909 to solicit local support for the newly proposed county library plan. She spoke with the boards of trustees of the Santa Cruz and Watsonville libraries. She also met with members of the county board of supervisors, men's and women's civic associations, city council members, and officials of local school districts to explain the county library system and how it could work. After Eddy's visit, the Santa Cruz City Library Board of

² Della Haverland, "James Louis Gillis," *Pacific Bindery Talk* 7(1935):35.

Trustees passed a resolution at their September 24, 1909, meeting giving their unanimous support for establishing a county library system in cooperation with the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors.

However, it would take almost seven years of pressure and planning for the Santa Cruz County Library System to come to fruition. For although the Santa Cruz library board endorsed the county library plan, the county board of supervisors needed to be convinced of the benefits of the system before committing tax funds. Eager to obtain a county branch library in their communities, between 1909 and 1916, residents regularly petitioned the county supervisors and the Santa Cruz library trustees to establish a library branch in their vicinity. Santa Cruz newspapers were also quite vocal in urging the county supervisors to endorse the countywide library plan. This continuing pressure from citizens' groups, individual residents, and the local newspapers eventually persuaded the supervisors to establish a county library system, which they did in 1916.

The establishment and immediate success of Santa Cruz's county library system could not have happened without the dedication and expertise of librarian Minerva Waterman, who was able to navigate the social and political terrain that was required to successfully join the city and county library systems. The county system that she helped create was efficient and affordable, and beginning in 1917, library branches spread throughout the county bringing books to the people. The total number of cardholders increased threefold from 688 in 1916 to 2482 in 1926 and the total items circulated doubled from 11,749 to 23,100. From 1920 to 1929, the number of books shipped to the different branches rose from 11,000 to 20,000. This number would continue to grow

over the years and exemplifies the main goal of county libraries: to put more books in the hands of county residents, especially rural residents. The support from the county school system did not go unnoticed as they were able to provide a crucial bridge to rural Santa Cruz County both in number of branches and access to materials. True to the county library spirit, Santa Cruz County thus fulfilled the original county library vision set forth by James Gillis and the California State Library.

Watsonville, in comparison, rejected the county library system from the outset, with officials and residents unified in their opposition. Library leaders, city officials, and the general public objected to the Santa Cruz County Library System for a number of reasons. First, Watsonville residents desired complete autonomy in all library-related decisions and did not want outside officials making library policy. In particular, given the county's political and social history, Watsonville feared that the City of Santa Cruz might assume too much power over the administration and finances of the fledgling county system. The Watsonville City Library also believed that its patrons had different needs than individuals living elsewhere in the county, and city and library leaders did not want Santa Cruz County officials determining the library service for their unique community. Moreover, by remaining independent, the Watsonville Public Library reduced the number of decision makers and simplified the politics of running a library. Finally, this separate city library allowed residents to retain a sense of local pride in their small town and avoid being subsumed within the larger collective in Santa Cruz.

However, the consequences of remaining independent included an overall shortage of funding due to a smaller taxable geographic area. This lack of funding led to

the inability of the Watsonville Library to hire more staff over the ten year period covered by this study. Staff were also paid less in Watsonville than in Santa Cruz. The collection of the Watsonville Library was not able to grow at the same pace as the central library in Santa Cruz which gave Watsonville patrons a smaller collection to access. At times, Watsonville ran the risk of becoming more isolated and their political clout in the greater Bay Area and Northern California was lessened. Lastly, Watsonville was not able to add any new library buildings during this time which could have served a larger area within and outside the city limits.

When comparing the city and county library systems, it is worth noting that many similarities existed that were as important as their respective differences. Both library systems enjoyed early and on-going support from local women's groups and social and literary clubs, as well as local officials and business leaders and their wives. In Santa Cruz, particular support came from the WCTU, the Saturday Afternoon Club (which later became the Santa Cruz Women's Club), and the Native Daughters of the Golden West. Likewise in Watsonville, the women's groups involved in establishing the library included the WCTU (who were also members of the first library board of trustees), the Watsonville Woman's Club, and the Native Sons of the Golden West. The two library systems had very active boards of directors which consisted of prominent upper-class white men and women. Both cities applied for and received Carnegie grants at the same time; the Santa Cruz Carnegie-funded library opened in 1904, while the Watsonville Carnegie-funded library opened in 1905. Citizens of towns throughout the county gave a high level of support to their respective libraries and were willing to tax themselves for

library service. As a result, both systems steadily grew in the number of patrons, size of collections, and items circulated. In sum, both library systems desired to provide the best service to their communities and, ultimately, both achieved this goal.

In 1930, Julia E. Johnson compiled a series of articles, discussions, and bibliographies for a special issue of *The Reference Shelf* on the county library movement.³ In this edited volume, Johnson supplied an article in which she summarized the positive and negative aspects of the county library system, many of which could be seen in Santa Cruz County. In her discussion of the positive aspects of the county library system, Johnson begins with a restatement of the county library's mission—to provide equal access to books to all regions of the country. Changes in the nation's social, industrial, economic, and political climate, she argued, made an informed and engaged public through reading necessary. In addition to creating an educated populace and equalizing "library opportunities over a large area," Johnson also argued that, "the county library is economical, efficient and generally beneficial."⁴ It centralizes technical services which standardizes library processes and reduces duplicate efforts. The county library provides an efficient model for administration and reserves professional librarians for supervisory roles and leadership. County libraries are also beneficial to school districts as many county branches were located in local schools where experienced librarians assisted with book selection and answered reference questions. Finally, Johnson stated that the county library benefits the wider the county as a whole, bringing

³ Johnson, *The Reference Shelf*.

⁴ Ibid., 11.

together various civic organizations and city governments and promoting unity and cooperation among them.

Despite the many positive aspects of the county library system, Johnson's article also noted some drawbacks, many of which can be seen in Santa Cruz County as well. The political process involved in establishing a county library was slow and, at times, contentious. In fact, as late as 1930, 2,800 counties across the country still had no county library service.⁵ One of the major drawbacks had to do with funding. The cost of serving rural populations was high, and the tax burden was not evenly distributed. County libraries inevitably increased taxes in most communities, and cities wishing to retain their own libraries would be double taxed. In addition, vesting power over the library with a county board of supervisors placed library management under political rather than professional control. "County supervisors as a rule," wrote Johnson, "are noted more for political affiliation and activities than for administration."⁶ Not only was administration at the county level inefficient, ill will and jealousies might arise as services remained unequal until all branches could be built. With few administrative roles remaining, local responsibility would be discouraged and pride in the library branch would decrease.

For many of the positive and negative reasons cited above, Santa Cruz County has maintained two separate library systems over the years. Yet the question of joining the two systems is periodically raised. Outside consultants have been hired, ideas

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 27.

exchanged, possibilities entertained. Each time the idea is broached, however, the same conclusion is drawn and Watsonville continues as an independent citylibrary.

The issue of Watsonville joining the county system arose most recently in spring 2014, when the Santa Cruz City/County Library proposed to levy a 2016 county library facilities parcel tax. Here again, Watsonville was steadfast in its determination to maintain an independent library. As the *Sentinel* reported, “One thing is clear: Watsonville isn't interested in joining the Santa Cruz system. [City Manager Carlos] Palacios said he doesn't see any that any efficiencies gained would be worth the loss of local control.” The city manager’s response was not much different from that of Watsonville officials for the last one hundred years:

“The Watsonville community really values local control over our library, to be able to hire our own library director and to have our City Council being able to set policies,” Palacios said. “You would worry just because, would Watsonville still have the same services it has right now with a larger countywide organization? There's a lot of fear about that in the community.”⁷

The time may come when it will truly be in the best interest of both Watsonville and Santa Cruz County to combine their library systems into one. Many conditions would need to be satisfied on behalf of both library systems, particularly in terms of providing equal service for Watsonville residents. For now, especially considering that Palacios’s statement mirrors what many Watsonville residents and officials felt one hundred years ago, the library is quite content with the current county structure.

⁷J. M. Brown and Jason Hoppin, “Santa Cruz Library System Could Write a New Chapter,” *Sentinel*, April 12, 2014.

Appendix A

County Free Library Law

Chapter 68

An act to provide for the establishment and maintenance of county free libraries in the State of California, and repealing “An act entitled ‘An act to provide county library systems,’ approved April 12, 1909, and all acts and parts of acts in conflict with this act.”

[Approved February 25, 1911]

The people of the State of California, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Boards of Supervisors of the several counties shall have power to establish and maintain, within their respective counties, county free libraries in the manner and with the functions prescribed in this act.

SEC. 6. A commission is hereby created to be known as the board of library examiners, consisting of the state librarian, who shall be ex officio chairman of said board, the librarian of the public library of the city and county of San Francisco, and the librarian of the Los Angeles public library. The members of said board shall receive no compensation for their services, except their actual and necessary traveling expenses, to be paid out of the state library fund. Said board shall pass upon the qualifications of all persons desiring to become county librarians, and may, in writing, adopt rules and regulations not inconsistent with law for its own government, and for carrying out the purposes of this act. Persons of either sex shall be eligible to certification for the office of county librarian.

SEC. 7. Upon establishment of a county free library, the board of supervisors shall appoint a county librarian, who shall hold office for the term of four years, subject to prior removal for cause, after a hearing, by said board. No person shall be eligible to the office of county librarian unless prior to his appointment, he has received from the board of library examiners a certificate of qualification for the office. At the time of his appointment, the county librarian need not be a resident of the county nor a citizen of the State of California.

SEC. 8. The county free library shall be under the general supervision of the board of supervisors, which shall have power to make general rules and regulations regarding the policy of the county free library, to establish, upon the recommendation of the county librarian, branches and stations throughout the county and may locate said branches and stations in incorporated cities and towns wherever deemed advisable, to determine the number and kind of employees of such library, and to appoint and dismiss such employees upon the recommendation of the county librarian. Such employee shall not be removed except for cause, and in case any such removal be made upon the ground that

the services of such employee are no longer required, such removed employee shall have the first right to be restored to such employment when such services are again required, but the board of supervisors may, at the time of appointing any employee, and upon the recommendation of the county librarian, enter into an agreement that such employee be employed for a definite time only. All employees of the county free library whose duties require special training in library work shall be graded in grades to be established by the county librarian, with the advice and approval of the state librarian, according to the duties required of them, experience in library work and other qualifications for the service required; and before appointment to a position in the graded service, the candidate must pass an examination appropriate to the position sought, satisfactory to the county librarian, and show a satisfactory experience in library work. Work in approved library schools or libraries, or certificates issued by the board of library examiners, may be accepted by the county librarian in lieu of such examination. The county librarian may also accept as apprentices, without compensation, candidates possessing personal qualifications satisfactory to him and may dismiss the same at any time if in his judgement their work is not satisfactory to him.

SEC. 9. The county librarian shall, prior to entering upon the duties of his office, file with the county clerk the usual oath of office and a bond, conditioned upon the faithful performance of his duties, with sufficient sureties approved by a judge of the superior court in the county of which the librarian is to be the county librarian, in such sum as may be determined by the board of supervisors. The county librarian shall, subject to the general rules adopted by the board of supervisors, build up and manage, according to accepted principles of library management, a library for the use of the people of the county, and shall determine what books and other library equipment shall be purchased. The salary per annum of the county librarian shall be as follows: In counties of the first to the third classes inclusive, two thousand four hundred dollars; of the fourth to the tenth classes inclusive, two thousand dollars; of the eleventh to the twentieth classes inclusive, eighteen hundred dollars, of the twenty first to the thirtieth classes inclusive, fifteen hundred dollars; of the thirty first to the forty eighth classes inclusive, five hundred dollars. The salary of each of the county librarians here provided shall be paid by each of such counties in equal monthly installments, at the same time and in the same manner and out of the same fund as the salaries of other county officers are paid. The county librarian and his assistant shall be allowed actual and necessary traveling expenses incurred on the business of the office.

Appendix B

Handwritten Petitions for County Service: Santa Cruz County Records

Petition for the Establishment
and Maintenance of County Free Library
Service in Highland School District
in the County of Santa Cruz.

We, the undersigned, residents of Highland
School District, County of Santa Cruz, State of
California, do respectfully request the
honorable Board of Supervisors of said
County of Santa Cruz, to extend to us the
privileges contemplated in the California
County Free Library law, according to the
provisions of chapter 68, of the Statutes of 1911.

<u>Names</u>	<u>Names</u>
Donald R King.	Lucy B. Palmer.
Henry H. Davis.	Richard Wolpert.
Chas L. Palmer	Edw S. Smith.
Ella D. Johnson	Mrs. Sarah Simpson
H. J. Graham	Cornelia Palmer
E. S. Jones	Jennie R. Taylor.
D. J. Emery.	Belle Ingraham
H. Lohrer.	Mrs B. Britton
A. Rapp.	F. J. Wmch
Mrs. A. Rapp.	Mrs. W. S. Wmch
Mrs. J. Rapp	Annie Wicht.
Mrs. C. Rapp	Mrs. J. L. Wicht
Mrs. J. B. King.	Louis Wicht.
John Wm Lupton	J. L. Wicht
John A. Wood.	Ernest E. Walty
Ruby F. Johnson.	P. P. Blough.
Ida Ingraham.	

honorab^{le} Board of Supervisors of said County of Santa Cruz, to extend to us the privileges contemplated in the California County Free Library law, according to the provisions of chapter 68, of the Statutes of 1911.

Names

Donald R King.
Henry H. Davis.
Chas L. Palmer
Ella D. Johnson
H. J. Ingraham
C. S. Jones
D. J. Emery.
H. Lohrer.
A. Rapp.

Mrs. A. Rapp.
Mrs J. Rapp
Mrs C. Leche.
Mrs. J. B. King.
John W. Lapham
John A. Wood.
Ruby F. Johnson.
Ida Ingraham.
Anna May Johnson.
Charlotte S. Palmer.
H. R. Walter
Miss Josie Clough.
Mrs D. Steffens
Carl N. Carlsen
Howard H. Johnson.
Dorothy Steffens.
Royce Wicht.
Sara Van Gardingen.
W. H. McKenney
Mildred McKenney.
Marie L. Cottle.
A. Palmer

Names

Lucy B. Palmer.
Richard Wolpert
E. G. Holmuth.
Mrs. Sarah Simpson
Cornelia Palmer
Jennie R. Taylor.
Belle Ingraham
Mrs B. Britton
F. L. Wrench

Mrs F. S. Wrench.
Annie Wicht.
Mrs. J. L. Wicht
Louis Wicht.
J. L. Wicht
Ernest E. Waltz
D. P. Clough.
D. Steffens
Arthur L. Cottle
Mrs H. Carlsen
F. J. Carlsen.
Arthur H. H. Carlsen
F. A. Carlsen
Otto Rapp
J. L. King
L. J. Rapp
M. H. Rapp
Marion Fiedel
Emma Fiedel

A. Rapp.

Mrs. A. Rapp.

Mrs. J. Rapp.

Miss C. L. Loh.

Mrs. J. B. King.

John W. Lupton.

John A. Wood.

Ruby F. Johnson.

Ida Ingraham.

Anna May Johnson.

Charlotte S. Palmer.

H. C. Walter.

Miss Josie Clough.

Mrs. D. Steffens.

Carl N. Carlson.

Howard L. Johnson.

Dorothy Steffens.

Royce Wicht.

Sara Van Gardingen.

Dr. H. H. McKenney.

Mildred McKenney.

Marie E. Pettit.

A. Palmer.

Malcom B. Palmer.

Arno Fidel.

Walter S. Wicht.

Steffi Fidel.

May Jones.

Caroline Rapp.

W. Langley.

Mary G. C. Langley.

E. May Gibbs.

D. J. D. Jones.

J. L. Wrench.

Mrs. F. S. Wrench.

Annie Wicht.

Mrs. J. L. Wicht.

Louis Wicht.

J. L. Wicht.

Ernest E. Waltz.

T. P. Clough.

D. Steffens.

Arthur L. Pettit.

Mrs. H. Carlson.

F. J. Carlsons.

Arthur H. H. Carlsons.

F. A. Carlson.

Edith Rapp.

J. B. King.

L. J. Rapp.

M. H. Rapp.

Marion Fiedel.

Emilia Fiedel.

Mr. & Mrs. W. J. Wolcott.

Mrs. Grandeman.

M. Barstow.

J. Wragg.

Mrs. Julia Petit.

H. Pettit.

J. H. Himmel.

Mrs. J. Hummel.

A. S. Miller.

Wrights, Calif. Jan. 17. 1918,
Hon. Board of Supervisors,

I am
enclosing herewith a petition
that explains itself. I did not
get quite over the district, but
this represents most all the
reading public up here now.

Yours sincerely,
H. H. Davis.

Wrights, Calif. Mar. 30. 1914.

Chairman Co. Board of Supervisors,
Santa Cruz.

Dear Sir:

Two months ago I passed around a petition in this district & nearly every one signed it requesting the Board of Supervisors to grant us the county library privileges & facilities provided for by the state law. Perhaps there has been a slip some where for I have had no word in regard to it at all.

Will you please tell me if you know anything about it & oblige,

Yours respectfully,
H. H. Davis,

no funds on
hand, appear
before Bd after July 1

Telton, Sep. 30, 1909.

Mr. Jacob Warkman,
Boulder Creek, California.

Dear Sir:

The residents of Telton
and vicinity are universally
in favor of the establishment
of a sub-station of the Free
County Library at Telton school
house, and earnestly beg of
you to use your influence
in securing the adoption
of a resolution to that effect
at the regular meeting of the

42.

Board of Supervisors next
Monday, Oct. 3, 1909.

The following are the
names of the persons who
have been personally inter-
viewed and who thus
express their approval of
the establishment of a
sub-station at Feltton
Schoolhouse.

Mary D. Wheeler,

Prin. Feltton Public Sch.

Helen L. Nims

Assistant

George N. Day, Trustee

Harry A. Denald.

Chas. R. Prouty

#3.

F. D. Keith
David Rose
J. R. Rose

W. A. Bell
W. L. Bell
J. J. Johnson

Mrs. L. L. Tamm.

Mrs. D. A. Simmons

L. F. Randolph.

Mrs. Wm. Trott

J. H. Hibberd

M. E. Dougherty

Hy. Allen

A. H. Ashley.

Geo. Hetherington.

A. S. Gask

Alice Q. Clement

Joseph W. Hayes.

Mrs. H. H. Glass.

J. F. Berry

C. H. Winters

Laura Neimann

Mrs. C. E. Draper.

Wm. Matting.

Chas. F. Jones

Boulder Creek, Cal., Apr. 5, 1913.
Board of Supervisors of Santa Cruz Co.,
Santa Cruz, Calif.

Gentlemen:

At a recent meeting of the Trustees of the Boulder Creek Public Library, it was decided to petition the Board of Supervisors for financial aid in maintaining the public library at Boulder Creek.

The reasons for this may be set forth as follows:

- 1- The library provides books and other reading material for many residents of the county outside of the city.
- 2- Summer visitors from the adjoining country and nearby towns secure much reading matter from this library.
- 3- In the interest of education and in a desire to welcome summer visitors to the San Lorenzo Valley, this library does not charge for library privileges when used by outsiders.
- 4- The assessed valuation of our city is about \$175,000, and the rate allowed for library purposes is 15%, making about \$260 available for the maintenance of the library.
- 5- Our expenses are as follows: Librarian, \$180 a year; rent, \$36 a year; lighting, \$12 a year; wood, about \$25 a year; periodicals, newspapers, etc, about \$15 a year, making a total of \$268 a year. Added to this there must necessarily be a few dollars for incidentals.
- 6- Our allowance does not permit us to purchase new books nor to replace those worn out.

In view of the above, we respectfully ask your Board to assist us in providing books and other reading material for the residents and visitors of this part of the valley, thereby providing for their information and enjoyment.

Respectfully submitted,
Boulder Creek Public Library.

L. O. Munson, Secy

3 vols. Science and Health, 1 Vol. Life of Mary Baker Eddy, 1 Vol. Miscellaneous Writings, 1 Vol. The First Church of Christ Scientist and Miscellany, 2 Vols. No and Yes, 1 Vol. Christian Science vs. Pantheism, 2 Vols. Unity of Good, 2 Vols. Pulpit and Press, 2 Vols. Retrospection and Introspection, 2 Vols. The Peoples Idea of God, 2 Vols. Rudimental Devine Science and Editorial Comments (Paper Back).

I hereby certify that the above is a true and correct list of books and pamphlets ^{to} ~~donated by~~ the Christian Science Society of Boulder Creek ~~to the Boulder Creek Library at the time the Town was disincorporated~~

Edee M. Perkins

Librarian of the Town of Boulder Creek when the Town was disincorporated.

Dated Boulder Creek, Cal. September 22, 1916

18. Louis Camis
19. Leitha Jones
20. May Bobby.
21. Ruth Merrill.
22. Elbridge Hussey
23. Wallie Cross
24. Alongo Sorensen
25. Ned Atkinson.
26. Mary Thompson
27. Joe Taylor.
28. Mary Wood.
29. Laura Hussey.
30. Norman H. Angell.
31. Fred Schwanze
32. Herbert Schwanze
33. "Ruby Bobby.
34. Daniel O'Keefe.
35. Roy Tarleton.
36. Hanson Hoig
37. Brenda Gunnison.
38. Lillie Bobby.
39. Irving Sawyer.
40. Edward Roy.
41. Ora Taylor.
42. Lester Herdt.
43. Alice Freshour.
44. Everett Freshour.

- 45 Thelma Cook.
- 46 Olive Malloch.
47. Marguerite Dakan.
- 48 Evan. Marlin.
- 49 Lowell West
- 50 Muriel Veyette.
- 51 Clarence Houghton.
- 52 Grace Taylor.
- 53 Robert Houssey.
- 54 Kathryn Dutcher.
- 55 Sterling Bedell.
- 56 Lillian Hedlund.
- 57 Gordon York.
- 58 Marietta Mocken.
- 59 Umberto Rossi.
- 60 Dorothy Postwick.
- 61 Cluyn Reynolds
- 62 Lloyd Fleckner.
- 63 Rose Lorenza.
- 64 Charlie Bobby.
- 65 Esther Giardini.
- 66 Elmer Soper
- 67 Walter Foland.
- 68 Tommy Rhoades.
- 69 Ruth Barson.
- 70 Beulah Conriad.
- 71 Robbie Fletcher.

- 72 Mabel Ione Lewis.
- 73 Johnnie Hedlund.
- 74 Winnie Camis.
- 75 Willie Ryder.
- 76 Marion Hedrick.
- 77 Rosalie Schwager.
- 78 Manuel Bettencourt.
- 79 Kenneth Marlin.
- 80 Roderick Degener.
- 81 Jimmie Mann.
- 82 Willie Tarleton.
- 83 Albert Heidt.
- 84 Alfred Bars on.
- 85 Ronald Hayes.
- 86 Wilbur Fleckner.
- 87 Warner Conrad.
- 88 Angela Mersaroli.
- 89 Mabel Erickson.
- 90 Carmelina Camis.
- 91 Marjorie Mallock.
- 92 Elsie Stratton.
- 93 Lewis Stewart.
- 94 Claribel Prothers.
- 95 Dale Dinmore.
- 96 Lawrence Finch.
- 97 Wilbur Jones.

Willbur Jones.

- 88 Norman Dutcher
89 Solon Houghton.
90 Nathan Heath
91 Alice Ryder
92 Gilla Sherman.
93 Josephine Mersaroli.
94 Clara Bettencourt.
95 Elfleda Kratzes.
96 Elsie Heidt.
97 Vivian Eaton.
1st & 2nd 98 Catherine Curran
99 Fernviene Curran.
100 Mary Heidt.
101 Cora Bender.
102 Emily Thompson.
1st yr. 103 Dorris Hayes.
B class 104 Nellie Bettencourt.
105 Gladys Weymouth.
106 George Freshour.
107 James Taylor.
108 Eddae Underwood.
109 Alfred Tarleton.
110 Walter James.
111 Roy Fletcher.
112 Jack Malloch,
113 Elia Pincerich.
114 Lee Eaton. 1140 Jewel Sherman.
A class 115 Annie Pincerich

116. Hazel Acardini.
117. Nora Mallon.
118. Velma Pesser.
119. Edith Kiler.
120. Jessie Pieri.
121. Mabel Freshour.
122. Ethel Fletcher.
123. Ethel James.
124. May Schwanze
125. Leslie Stratton
126. Eldon Sherman.
127. Frank Ames.
128. Roy Hedlund.
2nd. 129. Jennie Carnecia.
130. Beatrice Stewart.
131. Pearl Swan.
132. Viola Rhoades.
133. Claudine Glau.
134. Bertha Toland
135. John Stratton
136. Fred Terwilliger
137. Edgar Taylor.
138. Augenia Mersaroli.
139. Bertram York.
140

Appendix C

1916 Contract Santa Cruz County and City Library

That in consideration of the sum of \$2000.00 to be paid by the County of Santa Cruz into the Library Fund of the Santa Cruz Library for the carrying out of the provisions of Sec. 16 of the Library Law of 1911; that the Board of Library Trustees of the City of Santa Cruz enter into that certain contract hereinafter set forth, and that the President and Secretary respectively of the said Board of Library Trustees be, and they are hereby authorized, to execute the said contract in triplicate for and on behalf of the said Board of Library Trustees, which said contract is in their terms and figures as follows, to-wit:-

THIS AGREEMENT entered into this the 13th of October, A.D., 1916 by the Board of Library Trustees of the City of Santa Cruz on behalf of said City, party of the first part, and the County of Santa Cruz by its Board of Supervisors, party of the second part.

WITNESSETH: -

The Board of Library Trustees of the said City of Santa Cruz agrees to assume, from the 15th day of November, 1916, within the County of Santa Cruz, the functions of a County library according to the provisions of Section 16 of the act entitled: "An act to provide for the establishment and maintenance of County free libraries in the State of California, and repealing an act entitled 'An act to provide county library systems', approved April 12, 1909, and all acts and parts of acts in conflict with this act", approved February 25, 1911. In pursuance thereof all residents of that portion of said county of Santa Cruz which is or shall be taxed for said county library purposes, shall be entitled to all the privileges offered by said library on the same terms as residents of the said City of Santa Cruz. The Board of Trustees of said library shall establish branch libraries, deposit stations and delivery stations in the various parts of said county, wherever expedient and feasible with the means at its disposal, such books, furniture and other

property in said branches and stations as are or shall be furnished by the party of the first part, to be the property of said party of the first part. The said Board of Trustees shall direct its librarian or her assistant from time to time to visit the several parts of the county for the purpose of studying the needs of the same and inspecting the branches and stations, and shall pay the expense of such travel, and also the expenses of the attendance of such librarian at any convention of county librarians called by the State Librarian. Said Board of Library Trustees shall furthermore cause its librarian to make a report to the County Board of Supervisors, quarterly, hereafter, on the condition of library work within said county, of which report a copy shall be transmitted to the State Librarian; it shall cause the said librarian to build up and manage public library work within said county according to accepted principles of library management, and to cooperate in every expedient manner with the librarians of other public libraries within the county and state, including the county law library, the various school libraries and the State Library.

In consideration of the foregoing agreement, between the parties thereto, the said County of Santa Cruz agrees (promises) to pay into the library fund of said City of Santa Cruz, the sum of Two Thousand Dollars in two equal payments of One Thousand Dollars each. The first payment to be made on the first Friday after the first Monday in January, and the second payment to be made on the first Friday after the first Monday in July of each year, together with such other sums as may be apportioned to the County Library Fund, or such other sum as may hereafter be agreed upon by and between the parties hereto.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the said Board of Library Trustees of the City of Santa Cruz has caused this agreement to be executed and signed in triplicate by its president and secretary and attested by the seal of said Board; and the said County of Santa Cruz has caused it to be so executed by the chairman of its Board of Supervisors and attested by the seal of said board and the signature of the clerk of said board, the day and year first above written.

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