

# Cary Library Realized As Result Of Dr. George Cary Bequest, Gift Of Andrew Carnegie, Town Funds

Although the inspiration for what we now know as the Cary Library had its first beginning in the year 1850, it was not until the turn of the century that a free public library was finally established here that was to endure and grow.

The institution of which the Town of Houlton is justly proud and which has done incalculable good for the culture of its people over the past 60 years, owes its start to the persistence of a group of public spirited people who recognized the great good that a free public library could contribute to the life of a community and were determined to see their dream realized.

### UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS

But there were several false starts and unsuccessful attempts before any degree of permanent and useful status was acquired by the modern institution which so capably serves this town today.

The first stirrings of any interest in or need for a library were evident a couple of years after Houlton Academy opened its doors in 1848. It was in 1850 that the first principal of the school, Milton Welch, began agitating for the establishment of a library for the use of his students. He succeeded in arousing some interest among the townspeople

and he was also responsible for the formation of a literary club here that was called, The Forest Club.

This club purchased a number of the best books of the day and these were rented out to the members. The fate of this experiment could have been forecast quite readily. There was no money furnished with which to purchase new books so, when the original volumes had gone the rounds, interest flagged and the first nucleus of a library in Houlton was packed away where it would remain for almost two decades.

### SECOND EFFORT STARTED

It was 18 years later, in 1868,

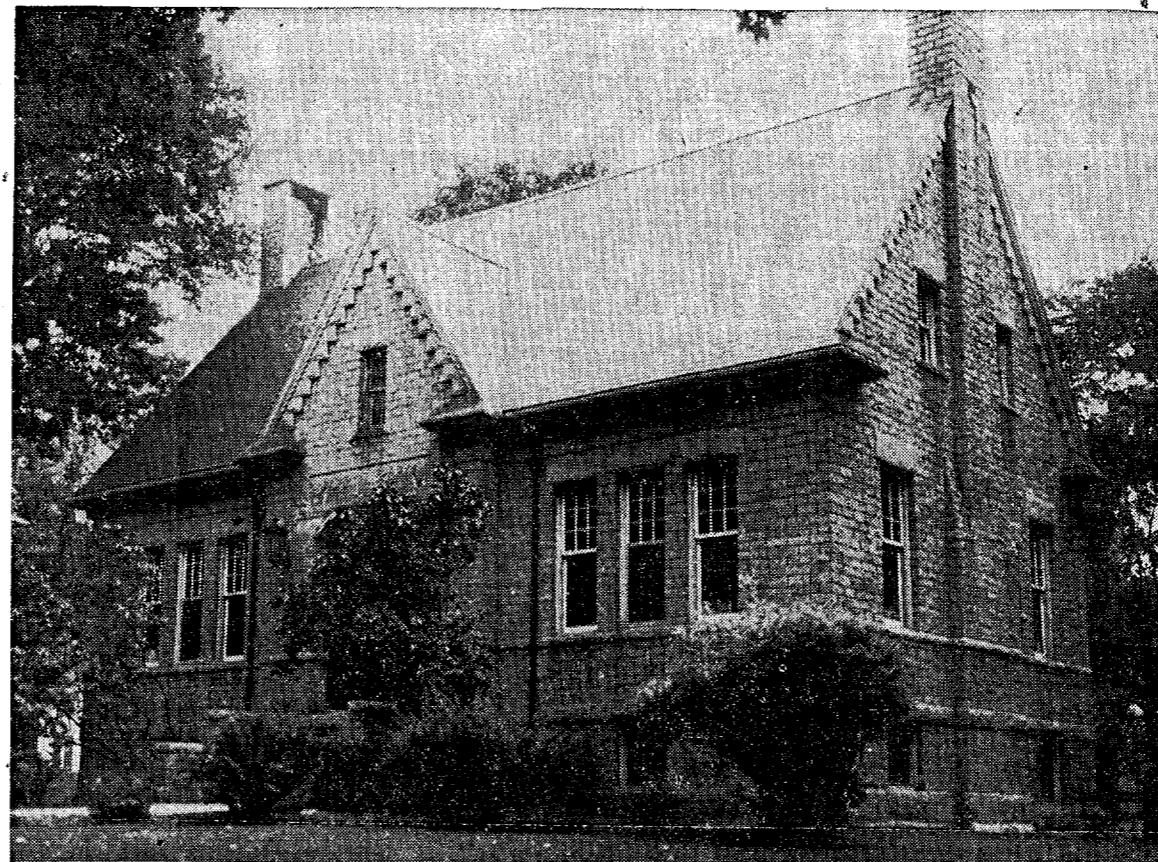
before there was any revival of interest in a library in this community. Principal of the Academy at that time was Charles H. Fernald and it was he who organized the second effort to establish a library. For a time the attempt gave promise of being successful. The former members of The Forest Club agreed that the volumes that had been packed away for so long, could be brought out and put into use by the "Houlton Library and Literary Association and united with the Public Library now about to be established in Houlton village, kept in some suitable place, and held accessible for public use on terms as heretofore imposed."

In March, 1868 a petition was passed for the incorporation of the Library and Literary Association for the Town of Houlton. By the payment of one dollar, a person could become a member of the association; by paying five dollars, he or she could become a trustee.

### ORIGINAL TRUSTEES

The following were listed as original trustees: George Cary, Charles P. Tenney, James F. Holland, Jefferson Cary, G. B. Page,

## Over 20,000 Volumes Now On Its Shelves



For well over half a century this beautiful community asset has been making substantial contributions to the culture and education of the people of this community. It has borne out every hope of its great benefactor, Dr. George Cary.

Theodore Cary, Almon H. Fogg, J. H. Bradford, Ransom Norton, Hadley Fairfield, Jotham Donnell, Charles H. Fernald, J. C. Madigan, L. S. Strickland, D. Webber, Cyrus M. Powers, C. Her- rin, N. Churchill and Robert Estey.

Jotham Donnell was elected president of the trustees. Theodore Cary, editor and publisher of the Aroostook Times, became vice president, J. F. Holland, secretary and George Cary, treasurer. The directors were Charles Fernald, Jefferson Cary and Almon H. Fogg.

Earlier in the year the trustees had held a meeting in the Congregational vestry at which arrangements were made for a course of lectures to be given for the benefit of the library. This resulted in \$150 for the treasury of the library fund.

### ACADEMY COOPERATES

A further library service to the community was also made available late in 1868 when the trustees of Houlton Academy con-

N. T. Dutton as vice president, C. S. Estes as secretary, John B. Madigan as treasurer and C. H. Percival, J. F. Holland and George Cary as directors. The books, which it is supposed had again been stored away, were collected, and a room was rented in the Fogg block for \$100 a year. Miss Abby Webber was appointed librarian and the library was made free to all.

Another ten years elapsed during which time there seems to have been no accepted use for the library. There is no record of it continuing to function and, although it is difficult to imagine such a state of affairs, there doesn't seem to have been any demand for library facilities.

### SEEK FREE LIBRARY

Then the Fact and Fiction Club and the Houlton Woman's Club manifested an interest and started a vigorous agitation for a free public library that would be aided by the town through a direct appropriation to buy books. It having been found impossible to

have been an unusually happy one for the Cary Library. Rev. Charles E. Owen, a former pastor of the First Baptist Church, here, was a member of a committee that had charge of the building of a new library in Waterville. That project had been substantially helped by the late Andrew J. Carnegie whose philanthropies were responsible for the erection of libraries in hundreds of communities across the nation.

Dr. Owen was constantly engaged in correspondence with Mr. Carnegie's secretary and he mentioned the plight of the public library in Houlton and its need for a building.

### PROMISED \$10,000

Prompt action followed. Through his secretary, Mr. Carnegie promised Houlton a gift of \$10,000 for its library fund.

The usual conditions were imposed which were that the town

furnish a building site and guarantee a certain sum for the maintenance of the library.

This benefaction could not have been better timed. It was about this time that part of a bequest to the Houlton Public Library by Dr. George Cary, who had died four years before, had become available. When James Archibald, then president of the trustees, was informed by Dr. Owen of the promised gift from Mr. Carnegie, a movement was soon underway to erect a suitable library building.

The Cary bequest totaled \$32,595.93 when the estate was finally fully settled. It was only one manifestation of the great affection for and interest in the people of his native town of Houlton held by Dr. Cary. Always lovingly remembered for his kindness and his help for the less fortunate, his bequest to the library "to be forever free to the citizens of Houlton" was the crowning gesture of his philanthropies.

### NO OTHER NAME

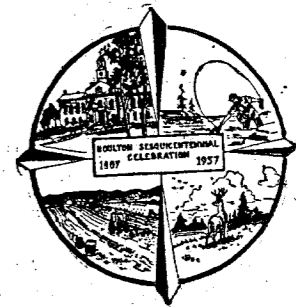
The naming of the library for

him could not have been otherwise in the light of his contribution to its realization, a living example of his love and thoughtfulness for his fellow man and his generosity in their behalf.

In no other manner can this quality in the character of the great benefactor of Cary Library be more eloquently shown than in the tenth paragraph in his will which included the library bequest provision.

It reads as follows: "I am interested in the welfare of the people of my native town and believe that that is best promoted by a general diffusion of knowledge and the study of literature. It seems to me especially desirable that good books should be within the reach of the poor, by which their condition is bettered and they receive the pleasure of reading which the rich may enjoy. To the poor of Houlton, whose kindness I have experienced and who have been my patrons for many years, I am under obligation. Therefore, that I may acknowledge the same, and may also pay some worthy tribute to the mem-

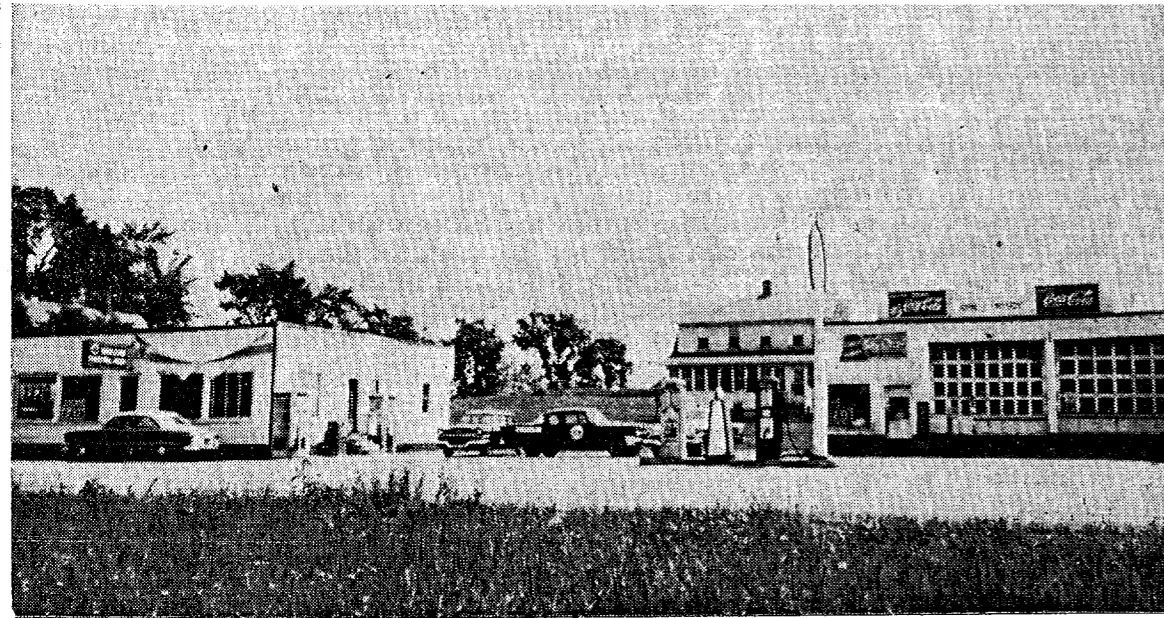
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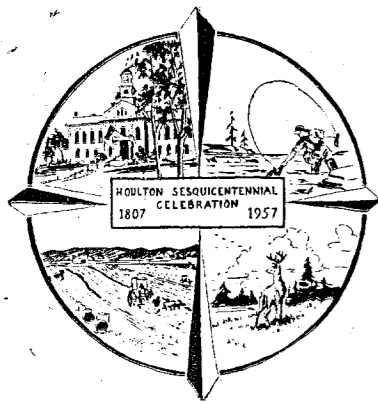


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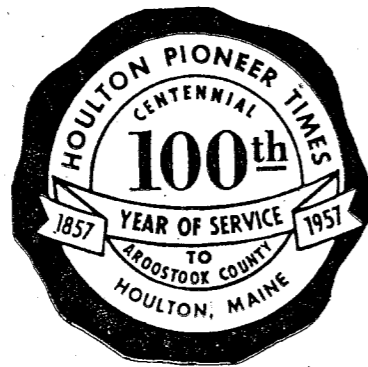
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on its  
Sesquicentennial

The Houlton  
PIONEER TIMES



on its  
Centennial

from

**CASSIDY'S**  
SERVICE STATION

Come Out and See Us on the Bangor Road

tees of Houlton Academy consented that 'the books now kept in the Academy building in Houlton may be taken in charge by the association, kept in some suitable place with the library now about to be established in Houlton by said association; the same to be accessible for the use of scholars and the public generally on similar terms as heretofore imposed'.

This vote was signed by the seven trustees and Messrs. Jotham Donnell, Theodore Cary and B. L. Staples were appointed as a committee to take such security measures as would insure the return of the books when called for.

There is some confusion about the conflicting dates and events of 1868 having to do with the second attempt to make available library facilities for the citizens of Houlton. Subsequent events reveal that this effort, too, was not destined to set up an institution that would endure.

For the next eight years the progress of the library is shrouded in mystery. If records were kept during that period, they have disappeared. It was not until 1876 that we find a vote recorded of an action by the trustees. And this was merely to accept the resignation of Hadley Fairfield as librarian and elect Miss Julia O. Herrin as his successor.

#### CHANGE OF LOCATION

At that time also a change of location was decided upon and the trustees voted to transfer the library to the Page building, in rooms that had been formerly occupied by the Houlton Reform Club. The trustees added the cautious proviso that the action was contingent upon there being no rental charge.

The building in question was a low wooden structure on the site now occupied by the John Watson Company. The street floor was then occupied by a drug store owned by Page and Cary, both of whom were trustees of the library. It was also voted to pay the librarian "the annual outlay out of fees collected for rent of books, not to exceed the sum of \$25.

#### ANOTHER VENTURE FAILED

Again the library venture languished and died. The shelves contained the same volumes. Since no new ones were added, the people of the town naturally lost interest and the next decade is another blank period in Houlton's library history.

Then, in 1886 the Houlton Library Association was again revived. Charles P. Tenney became president of the association, with

having been found impossible to support a library here that was not free, this new trend of thinking on the matter aroused fresh interest.

Once more the books of the former libraries were collected. A room was rented over a local store and the town, at its annual meeting, appropriated the sum of \$300 which was to be expended to buy books and to pay expenses of keeping up the library. Miss Carrie S. Miller, who later became Mrs. J. D. Perry, was retained as librarian and the room was kept open for two hours every Wednesday and Saturday afternoons. Miss Carrie Miller was followed by Miss Hortense Miller and Miss Carrie Dunn.

#### ON FIRM FOUNDATION

This time the project appeared to be on a firm foundation of lasting public acceptance. At last the Cary Free Public Library as we know it today, seemed on its way to permanence. The determination of the citizens to have available for future generations the essential services of a library was at last crowned with success.

In 1903 it was noted that 27 books were presented to the library and 189 were purchased by the trustees, making a total of 1632 volumes then owned and on the shelves.

The year of 1903 appears to



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is our business*

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AN ACTIVE PART IN THE BUILDING OF

**HOULTON**

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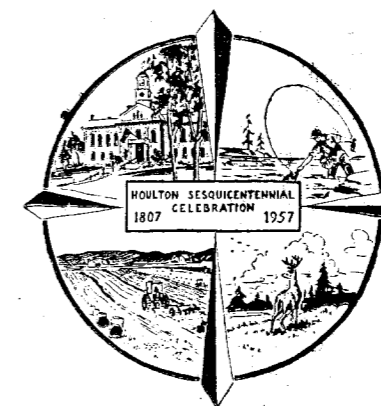
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