

DESCRIPTION OF THE OSHKOSH PUBLIC LIBRARY AT ITS GRAND OPENING

Excerpts from the *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*
Saturday Evening, September 1, 1900

CONTRACTOR AND ARCHITECT

Some Facts Concerning the Erection of the Structure

The Oshkosh public library building, which is to be thrown open to the public Monday, was erected by Charles Gindele & Co., of Chicago, contractors and builders. The architect being William Waters of Oshkosh.

On Feb. 14, 1899, the contract between the Gindele company and the city of Oshkosh was signed.

On April 11, 1899, the council added to the library site by the purchase of the Barber property adjoining the Harris property.

On April 24, 1899, actual work tending to the erection

of the library was commenced, under the supervision of Charles Rioch, superintendent for the Gindele company.

On Tuesday, May 30, the cornerstone was laid. The presentation address was made by Colonel John Hicks, and the address of acceptance by James H. Merrill, deceased, mayor of Oshkosh. Work was carried on steadily until the handsome building was completed. The structure was virtually finished July 1, 1900, but its formal opening has been delayed for two months to permit of finishing touches being made.

TYPE OF STRUCTURE

The Various Rooms and Descriptions of the Same

The library building is built after what is termed classic style. The beauties of antiquity are interwoven into the character of the building and one seems to gain an impression of art and literature when viewing the exterior proportions of the magnificent pile of stone. Facing the south and situated in one of the beautiful parts of the city it is a monument that will always attract attention. It occupies an entire block on Washington street and is bounded by Jefferson avenue and Mt. Vernon street.

Mere words hardly suffice to describe the building, constructed of gray stone known as Bedford stone. The only other materials that enter into the construction of the exterior is copper for the cornice and red tiling for the roof.

The structure must be viewed to be appreciated and yet a few details of its construction may add to the knowledge of the building.

Entrance to Structure Entrance is effected at the south. A broad walk of cement leading from the street walk takes the visitor to the portico, a beautiful piece of work suggesting the artistic columns of ancient times. Heavily buttressed steps, twelve in number, lead from the walk to the portico. Six columns two feet three inches in diameter and twenty-two feet in height support the roof of the portico. The pillars are fluted and rest upon moulded bases and are surmounted by Ionic capitals.

The main building measures 88 (?) x 50 feet. The portico measures 11-1/2 x 40 feet. It is built of Bedford limestone. The wing or stack room measures 26-1/2 x 59 feet and is forty feet high.

The Vestibule or Entry Just inside the main entrance is a vestibule 14 x 32 feet from which lead stairways to the basement and to the upper floor. The stairs are of iron and marble.



View showing vestibule and grand stairway.

Toilet Room

Descending into the basement the visitor will find a large toilet room to the right and under the dome and in the east room are the boilers and fuel rooms. On the west side is a large room which may be used for storage or any other purpose.

In the Rotunda Ascending again to the first floor and entering the rotunda the visitor finds himself in the delivery room. Immediately in front is the delivery desk, built of marble. Two bronze gates separate the delivery room from the stack room.

The rotunda measures 26-1/2 x 26-1/2 and is lighted from above through the dome which is sixty feet from the floor. At night 124 electric lights in the two circles in the dome illuminate the interior with a blaze of light.



Rotunda or delivery room. Delivery counter of marble, and glimpse of stack room in the distance. Dome effect also shown.

Periodical and Reference Rooms

To the right is the reference reading room, measuring 23 x 27 feet. This is amply lighted by numerous large plate windows. To the left is a room with two annexes, the main portions being of the same dimensions as the reference reading room. This is the periodical reading room, also well lighted and ventilated, where the studios may take advantage of the treasures contained on the shelves of the library. The arches through which these rooms are reached are supported by beautiful columns of stuff in imitation of marble.

The Stack Room

The stack room to the rear of the delivery desk is fire proof and measures 26 x 59 and is forty feet high. Each stack is seven feet high. But one floor has been provided with shelves, this being sufficient for the number of volumes now in the library.

Front Elevation of the New Oshkosh Public Library.



Librarian's Office The librarian and trustees' room is off the stack room and is also connected with the periodical and railing room by great double doors of paneled oak. The dimensions of this room are 13 x 27.

Occupying the same relative position as the librarian's room off the periodical room, is the reference room for the storage of reference works off the reference reading room. Entrance may also be had from the stack room. The dimensions are 13 x 23 feet.

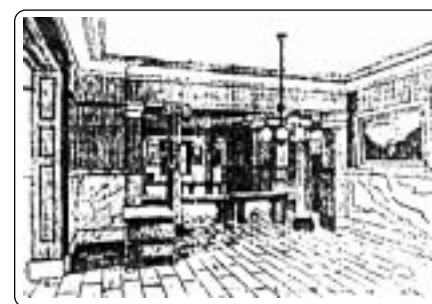
On Second Floor Returning to the entry the second floor is reached by means of an iron and marble staircase. Entering through large doors from the vestibule on the second floor the visitor finds himself in the dome gallery. A circular opening in the front is surrounded by a

bronze railing. From this gallery spectators may look down into the delivery room.

Art or Lecture Rooms To the east and to the west of the gallery are rooms each 37 x 46 feet, which in the future will be used for lecture, club or museum purposes, as the board of library directors may elect. At present they are unoccupied and until the board decides to what use they shall be put they will serve only to make the patrons of the library feel that there is no lack of room.

The first floor has tiling throughout except in the stack room, which, to give the light ample opportunity to reach all corners, is provided with glass for flooring.

The second floor is laid in hardwood throughout, with the exception of the vestibule.



View of the reference reading room on east side of library.

INTERIOR OF THE LIBRARY Detailed Descriptions of Beautiful Fixtures and Furnishings

In erecting a public library building that would become of monumental character to its citizens, the city of Oshkosh was wise and did not spend all of its library funds and its ingenuity in "mere outward work." The furnishings of the structure are in keeping throughout with the massive and rich architecture of the exterior. In point of richness and harmony with the style of the building the interior furnishings, from the most important to the least, are examples of splendid judgment and artistic taste

and nowhere in the city is the such an exquisitely furnished public building, nor will there be one in some years in all probability, so well equipped within to magnify the massive beauty without.

These furnishings represent an expenditure of many thousands of dollars and will compare very favorably with those in the public buildings of note in Chicago and New York or Washington. Certainly no expense was spared to secure the best and most modern furnishings the city

could afford and all the time the character of the building was born in mind with the result that scarcely could more perfect harmony of design and color and massive proportion be secured between furnishings and building.

The interior of the library building will prove a delightful revelation to the Oshkosh public and like Aladdin's palace of the fairy tale, will dazzle the sight of the hosts of citizens who do not yet know of the treasures of beauty contained within the stone and marble structure.

The Marble Work

When the library is thrown open for the first time next Monday, the public will not dream it dwelt in marble halls, for it will be a reality. Rich marbles of rare combinations of color, delicate tracery of vein and as highly polished as a plate glass mirror will greet the eye on every side.

Here are to be found pure white marbles that seem almost transparent and there are mottled greens and reds until the visitor is inclined to stop and stand in mute admiration of the effects, especially when the building is ablaze with electric lights from the hundreds of lamps encircling the rotunda and encrusted in the great brass fixtures thought the rooms. The marble work was furnished and placed by the Grant Marble company of Milwaukee.

In the Vestibule
The wainscoting in the vestibule and hallway are finished in two colors of gray Tennessee marble, one of the standard marbles of this country. The floors throughout the first floor are laid in large ashlar tiles of the lightest shade of Tennessee marbles.

Delivery Room

In the delivery room into which the vestibule opens and which lies between and opens into the reading room on one side and into the periodical room on the other, the richest marbles have been used. In this room are combined two of the hand-somest marbles raised in Europe or known to the trade. The St. Baum, used for the die or panel of wainscot, is a product of the quarries of Pourcieux in the arrondissement of Brignollec, France. The Rouge Royale or Royal Red, used in the cap and base, is a product of Belgium, the particular block used in the Oshkosh library having borne the quarry mark of the Villers-de-Gambon quarries.

Other Rooms

The periodical room and the reading room are finished in a uniform tone of white, the marble used being of the well known, but always admired, variety of white Indian quarried in the neighborhood of Carrara, Italy.

In a letter to The Northwestern soon after the completion of the building one of the leading members of the Granite Marble company said: "Oshkosh may congratulate herself, we believe, upon the use of so much of this historic and beautiful building material as the architects, Messrs. William Waters & Son, have incorporated into their design and color scheme."



Ex-Senator Philetus Sawyer

The Stack Room

To the book worm, who sees but little of the beauty of the architecture of the building, the modern stack room, where the thousands of volumes will be kept, appeals instantly. The arrangement of this department, considered the most important of all, is sure to be appreciated by the patrons of the library, for the shelves are so situated that the person in search of something good to read but does not know what he wants, may stroll in and out among the shelves, reading the titles of the volumes until he come to some one that tickles his fancy.

By the construction of glass floors and plenty of basement and second floor room beneath and above the main stack room, new stacks can be added as the library grows, until in place of one room, there may be three or four, one above the other, each separated from the one above by a floor of glass that permits of sufficient light to enter.

Description of Stacks

The stack room is fitted with Library Bureau steel stacks, manufactured by the Library Bureau of Chicago. These stacks are made throughout from steel constructional work, the uprights, or standards, carrying the entire shelving rise from stone and concrete piers covered with steel plates on a level with the basement floor and

extend up through the second floor and are prepared for a future two stories of stack.

The floor work is constructed on the lines of modern building construction and fitted with steel angle irons in frames into which the glass floor plates are securely set in special cement for this purpose. The construction of these angle irons carrying the floor is such as to allow for a ventilation of the stack room around the walls and windows, and to leave a space for the same purpose around each stack so that the stack continues from the basement of the building through from floor to floor in one continuous section until the top of the stack room is reached.

With the single stack room, as at present, the capacity of the library is about 30,000 volumes. With the basement and second floor utilized, the capacity will be from 90,000 to 100,000 volumes.

To the stack uprights, by means of patented mechanical devices, are attached the brackets which carry the shelves and complete the system of absolutely adjustable shelves.

These brackets are cast from a very handsome design and are finished in genuine Bower-Barff finish. The exposed ends of the stacks, that is the ends next to the delivery counter and next to the aisles, have an ornamental pilaster covering the uprights and furnishing a handsome and uniform appearance of individual book cases rather than a solid run of stack work as description of the construction would indicate.

These pilasters, or ornamental facings, are finished in the best finish of electro-plate of copper bronze, giving a bright effect which sets off the clear black of the brackets, and which brings out the character of the ends, as well as showing more clearly the beauty of the Bower-Barff finish.

The Stair Work

The stair work, which runs from the basement to the upper floor, is of a handsome design, and is finished in electro-plate of copper bronze, as is the ornamental rail which runs between the pillars back of the delivery counter and on the level with third floor of the stack room. The present stack consists of two tiers of stacks and two floors fitted for the erection of other tiers and other floors in the future. The openings on the second floor are neatly covered for the purpose of temporarily using this space an exhibition room, or for

other purpose.

The work throughout is handsome in design, mechanically perfect in detail and following the lines of arrangement almost unanimously called for by library workers. The architect, Wm. Waters, has shown ability not only in the lines of construction in the matter, but has shown a thorough knowledge of the requirements of a library stack room from a librarian's standpoint, and this part of the library, as well as all the other departments, is of the latest and most approved character.

Beautiful Brass Fixtures

While all the furnishings are proportionately excellent, the massive combination of gas and electric light fixtures throughout the building are especially admired for their beauty and unique design. The massive cluster of brass work in the chandeliers are wrought in heavy style to correspond with the architecture and yet are graceful and strikingly ornamental. The contract price was \$2,425.

The fixtures to be appreciated should be seen as no description can do them justice. The design is on the classic order and in strict harmony with the architectural style of the building; while an abundance of casting and extra heavy tubing is used in the construction, which necessarily makes them very heavy and massive. They are so designed that in every way they are the perfection of grace and beauty.

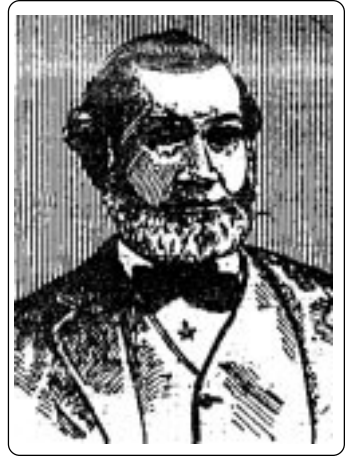
The treatment of the metal as to the finish is that which is known as old brass, a finish particularly adapted for the style of the fixture and in keeping with the finish of the hardware.



William Waters, Oshkosh

The glassware used to decorate the fixtures is what is known as alabaster, which has the tendency to subdue the harsh rays of the electric lamp and give a soft and mellow light which is not trying to the eye and yet is perfectly clear.

The W. C. Vosburgh Manufacturing Co. of Brooklyn which furnished the fixtures has wide reputation and is



The Late Marshall Harris

one of the oldest and largest manufacturers of fixtures in the country. Some of the buildings furnished by the company are the beautiful temple of Modern Woodmen of America in Rock Island, Ill. which is one of the handsomest buildings in the west; the Westminster Presbyterian church in Minneapolis, Minn., a church costing \$175,000; the fine Congregational church in Galesburg, Ill.; library buildings in Michigan City, Ind., Menasha and Appleton, Wis., and Rochester, Minn. (These latter are the latest ones.) Also the handsome Calumet club building in Chicago, and other fine public and private buildings such as court houses and the like.

Decorative Colors

The decorative work of the interior will delight the artist and satisfy the fastidious and the credit for the excellence of the decoration is due an Oshkosh decorator, H. M. Harmon. To cheer the visitor from the very start, the walls of the entry where the winding stairway is located and from which swinging doors of oak swing into the rotunda are brilliantly colored in turkey red watercolor. The walls at the upper landing of the stairway on the second floor are likewise in turkey red.

On the first floor the walls of the rotunda, reading room and reference room are colored a sage green, restful to the eye. The trimmings in these rooms are of marble finish. The walls of the librarians' and directors' room, adjoining the stack room, are finished in buff as is also the reference annex. On the second floor the walls are of this same buff color. The dome of the building is of ivory white.

The woodwork of the interior, consisting of heavy quarter sawed oak and massive panels of the same material is all highly polished in oil and the beautiful grain of the oak is vividly brought out.

Heating Apparatus
The chill of the coming winter will be overcome by an up-to-date steam system, which cost the city about \$2,000 to install. Two large boilers, manufactured by the American Sectional Boiler Co., are located in the basement and will furnish the steam for the labyrinth of pipes and radiators. The heating apparatus was put in by George McCallan.

The Chairs
It required six dozen chairs to completely furnish the library and represent a cost of \$36 a dozen or a total of \$432 (sic). They are of oak to match the tables and cabinets and are of massive style, especially designed for library purposes. The Buckstaff-Edwards Co. of this city manufactured the chairs.

Many Curtains
There ought to be plenty of light in the library building on account of the number of large windows. The firm of Feil and Scholz of this city was required to furnish seventy four window curtains and in this about 150 years of cloth are estimate to have been consumed. The color of the curtains is a dark green that is a pleasing contrast with the white stone outside and delicate tints within. The material in them is imported Scotch-Holland. About \$230 was paid for the curtains.

The Plumbing
The sanitary condition of the building should be excellent, judging from the thorough plumbing. There are two marble finished closets in the basement and one on the first and another on the second floor. Throughout the building water is furnished. C. L. Rundle of this city did the plumbing and the city paid about \$950 for the entire work.

Tables and Cabinets
Much of the handsome furniture in the building was manufactured by Robert Brand & Sons of this city. This furniture consists of a newspaper rack, thirty-eight feet of book case, a ten foot locker, a large revolving desk and two smaller desks, a tray cabinet, a combination file and periodical rack and thirteen tables. Heavy quarter sawed white oak was used in the furniture and the massive style conforms excellently with the architecture of the building and matches the woodwork. The finish of the different pieces is a high polish that brings out the grain and produces a rich gloss. The cost of the furniture was \$792.

The Lighting of the Library
Plenty of light will be given the interior as there are 321 incandescent lamps in circuit at present and twenty four will be added in the stack room, making in all 355 throughout the building. In the white dome alone there are 124 incandescent lamps. The stack room now has twenty-four and this number will be increased by twenty-four more.

With the entire blaze of light turned on, as it will be on the opening night, Monday, the lamps will each consume about one cent an hour in illumination or will burn an hour at a cost of about \$3.00 for the total number. It is estimated that the lights cost about 20 cents per 1,000 volts while lighted. Each lamp is six ampere, 220 volts, sixteen candle power. Besides the electric lamps in the chandeliers the fixtures are fitted for gas.

The electric lighting system is controlled by forty switches located on a switch board of marble adjoining the stack room. From the dynamo at the Oshkosh electric light station a separate cable, underground, leads to the switchboard in the building and day and night power is furnished, so that in case of a dark and rainy day, the lamps can be lighted. When the electric current is not in circuit, the gas will be used.

The Woodwork
The interior woodwork of the building, such as the paneling, bases, door jams, casing and doors were manufactured by the Morgan Co. of Oshkosh, as part of the contract of Gindele & Co. The contract price of the material was in the neighborhood of \$2,000. All of this material was quarter sawed white oak finished from Indiana lumber. It is very beautiful in grain and color and has the massive appearance of the remainder of the building. The heavy doors are veneer. The large front doors opening into the entry are heavy oak frames, containing heavy plate glass. The doors from the entry to the rotunda are solid oak veneer and swing together on double hinges.

Bronzed Railings
Winslow Brothers of Chicago furnished the bronzed railings used in various parts of the library structure. The contract price is \$275.

Cement Walk and Interior Stone Curbing Presents a Fine Appearance

Last but by no means least in the completion of the library is the cement sidewalk, which is nearly finished and the completion of which was awaited before the date of the opening was set. The sidewalk is 240 feet long on the Washington street side,

AROUND THE LIBRARY

the entrance is located and 120 feet long on the Jefferson avenue side. It varies in width from six to ten feet and the contractor in charge of the work estimated that there were about 4,500 square feet in the walk. The cost of the walk is about \$1,400. The cement is laid about six inches deep upon a foundation of rolled cinders. The

walk leading across the ground to the massive portico and fluted pillars is of double width and is also of cement.

The Stone Curbing
The stone curbing inside the walks on three side of the library grounds was by Charles Repe of this city. The line of curbing sets off the walk and grounds neatly. The contract price was \$296.

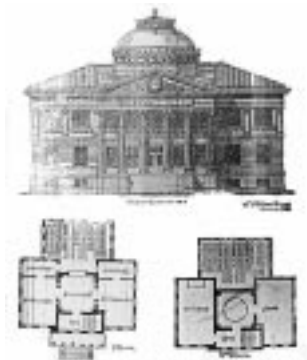
The Daily Northwestern.

OSHKOSH, SATURDAY, AUGUST 6, 1898

**Proposed Public Library Building
Plan of Wm. Waters,
Recommended by Library Directors for Adoption**

Oshkosh Daily Northwestern
August 6, 1898

Transcription of the text of article



The Northwestern today presents a picture of the proposed public library building, as drawn by Architect Wm. Waters, and recommended for adoption by the library directors. The front elevation exterior view with ground plans are shown in the accompanying illustrations. While the Waters plans for the new building have not yet been recommended for adoption by the library committee of the council, still the decision of the library directors in favor of the Waters plans over those submitted by other architects is somewhat indicative of the result of the action to be taken by the council presumably at the meeting a week from next Tuesday.

The Waters plans provide for a wonderfully handsome massive structure of light gray stone known as Old Hoosier Bedford stone, the same material as was used in the construction of the state library building at Madison and in the Milwaukee public library. From the outside nothing but stone will be in evidence, even the trimmings, the great columns and flights of steps being of that material. The style of architecture is adopted is of the Ionic design, showing beauty and strength in every detail.

The plan provides for the main entrance on the Washington street side, there being an eighty-six foot front, with an eighty foot depth on the Jefferson avenue side. The portico commanding the front entrance is supported by six massive columns of stone each being two and one-half feet in length (sic). The elevation of the building will be greater than of the government building, a flight of ten stone steps leading from the ground to the front door.

In the portico between the two outer columns on each side of the entrance, provision has been made for the placing of statues of Marshall Harris and ex-Senator Sawyer at some future time.

The building will be fire proof throughout, the roof being of copper and various portions of the structure being separated by sliding doors of steel and iron. Every floor in the building is to be fireproof. Oak finish will prevail, though the first floor will have a wainscoting of marble with tiled floor, the second floor being of oak.

On ascending the broad steps from Washington street a person finds himself in a broad hall or entrance from which doors open into the main delivery room which is twenty-eight feet square. Into this room a patron of the library goes when he approaches the counter of the librarian to make application for a book. The delivery room is lighted by means of the great dome. The room might be called a court, a person being enabled to stand there and gaze clear to the dome.

Opening from the delivery room which is in the center of the building is the reading room on the Jefferson avenue side 28x34 feet. In this apartment persons may come and sit and read after securing books if they do not care to carry them away. Opening from the delivery room on the east side is the periodical room 28x34 where all the leading magazines and newspapers will be on file for use of the public.

Apartments of smaller dimensions than either the reading or periodical rooms are directly in the rear of these room and are for the use of the librarian and library directors.

What will doubtless be one of the most interesting parts of the building to the general public will be the great stack room which is to extend from the basement to the roof unobstructed by floors. A winding stairway affords the librarian's clerks a means of ascending to any one of the four tiers, each of which contains eight shelves. The stack room has a capacity of 70,000 volumes and is separated from the other portions of the structure by sliding doors of iron or steel. The stack room is of large dimensions being 28x60 feet, the shelving and tiers will be of bronzed iron or some such material.

On the second floor of the building a large lecture room 28x48 fronts on the Jefferson avenue side and on the opposite side of the building is the art room of similar dimensions. The open court which extends from the roof to the ground floor, through the center of the building, is surrounded by a railing on the second floor which permits of a promenade walk or hallway around the entire court on the second floor.

The basement of the building will be finished in a substantial manner. There will be a large apartment to which the books will be brought and unpacked. An elevator will lead from the receiving room up into the stack apartment, thereby permitting of an expeditious handling of the books and the placing of the same on the shelves. Coal and boiler rooms and apartments for the engineers are also provided for, as are also water closets on the first floor for ladies and in the basement for gentlemen.

The structure is estimate to cost \$40,000 without furnishing and fittings which will add many thousand dollars more to the cost of the building.