

WANGANUI CITY LIBRARY PAPERS (part 1)

1877-1918

Wanganui Public Library was established when, a number of prominent Wanganui gentlemen took control of the Oddfellows Library. On 6 January 1877, they filed a declaration of incorporation in the Wellington Courts and the first Public Library in Wanganui was formed.

The library was run by a Board of Directors and people joined on a subscription basis. The first Honorary Librarian and first subscriber was the Hon John Ballance. The library remained in the Oddfellows rooms free of charge for the first year and later at a small rental, until the opening of the first library building in 1882.

The Government presented the Directors with a site for the new building in 1880 and tenders were called for its construction. The building was financed by two art and industrial exhibitions held in 1877 and 1881 and by the issuing of debentures for a £400 loan. Another exhibition was held in 1887 and further fund raising continued until 1892, when after a very successful bazaar the library became debt free. In fact enough money was raised to enable £167 to be put in trust as the nucleus for a museum building fund. The library is now the Repertory Theatre.

In 1914 the directors decided to hand the library over to the Borough Council as they felt it would better serve the people of Wanganui. However due to the outbreak of war this proposal was indefinitely delayed.

In November 1917 the Borough Council received notice of the bequest of £12,000 from Miss Elizabeth Alexander for the purpose of building a museum and public library in memory of her late father James Alexander. The library was handed over to the Borough in February 1918.

SCOPE

These papers cover the first part of the history of the Public Library in Wanganui, 1877-1918, the period of administration by a Board of Directors and membership by subscription.

They contain minutes of meetings, some correspondence, annual and monthly reports and financial records such as receipts and bank books. They also cover the three art and industrial exhibitions held to raise funds for the library.

For the later period 1918 - see NZC papers 2.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

SERIES ONE Minutes and reports
 1877-1918
 Two folders

This series consists of the minute book of the Wanganui Public Library Board of Directors 1888-1918, annual reports 1879-1917 and reports from the librarian to members of the board. The annual reports are interspersed within the minute book and the other reports are all arranged chronologically in the second folder.

The minutes and reports contain information relating to the day to day administration of the library. Figures for book stock, subscribers and financial information is included. The annual reports do not cover every year within the period.

SERIES TWO Correspondence
 1878-1888
 Eleven folders

Each folder contains inwards correspondence received during a given year. There are also occasional copies of outwards correspondence. The arrangement is chronological by date of letter.

The correspondence also deals with matters relating to the day to day running of the library. Requests for information about tenders, requests to join the library, letters from book suppliers and correspondence from the chess club relating to their room in the library. In 1880 there is also a selection of correspondence relating to the new library building.

SERIES THREE Exhibitions
 1877, 1881, 1887
 One folder

This series contains all information relating to the staging and management of the three art and industrial exhibitions held to raise funds for the library. The papers are arranged chronologically. The series also contains the bank book for the 1881 exhibition and the catalogue of exhibits for all three.

SERIES FOUR Debentures
 1882
 One Folder

The debentures in this series were issued in 1882 and were redeemable any time after 1889. Interest of 10% was payable on the first of June and first of December of each year. The loan was for £400 and each debenture for £5.

There are seven unissued and sixty cancelled debentures in this series.

SERIES FIVE Financial
 1877-1910, 1916-1918
 Thirty seven folders

Receipts arranged chronologically within each year.

This series contains receipts for goods and services paid for by the directors of the Wanganui Public Library and includes; the salary of the librarian, bank deposit slips, tenders for binding books and accounts from the Gas Corporation, H I Jones, A D Willis and plumbers etc. This series also includes library bank books for 1877, 1883, 1890 and 1902.

SERIES SIX Miscellaneous
 Three items

This series comprises the Certificate of Incorporation, 1877, a chart of building expenditure and a floor plan of the Ridgway Street Library.