

ADDRESS AT OPENING OF CAHUENGA BRANCH LIBRARY

BY CITY LIBRARIAN EVERETT PERRY

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Ladies and Gentlemen:

This evening I have the very pleasant task of introducing you to your own possession--this new Cahuenga Branch Library, and saying a few words to you concerning its possibilities of usefulness and value.

The library of today is built with a different plan and ideal from the library of 40 years ago. Those in charge have become more generous, and exhibit greater confidence in you in the way in which they allow you to use your own books. For fear that you may not have noticed this especially, I am going to call your attention to a few changes recently introduced into library administration.

A generation ago a visitor to an American public library would have found in evidence a far different spirit from what prevails today. Books were kept on closed shelves, and the librarians constituted himself their guardian. You were obliged to consult a printed catalogue (though sometimes there was none at all) fill out an application blank and wait patiently until the library attendant brought your book. In other words, methods that are now found only in reference collections of rare and costly books which have to be protected by the restrictions mentioned, formerly were employed in the circulation departments of libraries. The result was to discourage and drive away from the libraries the very readers whom the public libraries were designed to assist.

Let us glance a moment at the organization of a modern public library. Any citizen whose name is found in the city directory may take out library cards. You do not have to fill out application blanks to get books for home use, but instead you find the main collection of the library on open shelves, where you are at liberty to wander and select at will. If you have any difficulty in finding a particular book, trained attendants stand ready to help you. Every effort is made to render the use of the library easy, instead of placing

obstacles between the readers and the books, as was too frequently done thirty or forty years ago.

This branch library which we are opening tonight also represents the more modern spirit in library administration. It is not enough to smooth the path of readers to the central library, where good books stand invitingly on the open shelves. If books exercise a good influence, why not place them where people in all parts of the city can reach them without traveling long distances and without the expenditure of carfare. It was accordingly resolved especially in the large cities to establish branches which should bring the books to the people wherever they are. This idea is directly responsible for the building in which we find ourselves this evening.

After this meeting is over, you are all invited to inspect your new library. In advance of such a tour of inspection, it might be well now to explain the uses for which the various rooms are designed. The auditorium in which we are now assembled is intended for local meetings of all kinds, subject to the very liberal regulations of the Library Board. If your Improvement Association wishes to make this room its headquarters, they will be made welcome. The Parent-Teachers' local branch is cordially invited to hold its meetings here, and the room is free to the people for such meetings.

In the rear of the auditorium and separated from it only by folding doors, is the children's story hour room where every week the children of this neighborhood will be made acquainted with one at least of the classics of literature. Upstairs and to the right as you enter is another children's room, but this is where the children will read. Here will be kept several thousand carefully selected volumes of juvenile literature. When you and I were of a tender age, we had no such privileges as will be thrown open to the children of this neighborhood in this room. For not only will there be found here the best books of all time written for boys and girls, but the collection will contain books of a practical nature. Your boy can borrow here books on wireless telegraphy or raising rabbits; your girl, books on sewing or cooking.

To the left as you enter is the room for the adult readers. The books here are chosen to cover every subject of general interest and much more besides. You must remember that if you can't find what you want in this room, the branch is in quick communication with the central library. Tell the attendant what you need and she will have it brought out by the library automobile on the next delivery from the main library. Such deliveries are made three times a week. Don't be afraid to ask the librarian for any book or for information of any kind that you may wish to have.

In the room just behind the main desk will be shelved the fiction collection. Do not be surprised if you do not find here the latest novel that you have heard discussed or seen advertised. There is much trash published nowadays in the form of novels and it is the policy of this library to exclude such materials from its collections, and to buy only what is wholesome. There are far more novels at the same time wholesome, entertaining and inspiring, than any of us can find time to read, and it is not necessary to turn to the coarse or ~~s~~ensational.

I will complete our brief tour of the building by reminding you of the open air reading room at the northwest corner on the Madison Avenue side where we shall keep the current periodicals. This is an innovation in our branch libraries. If it proves successful, we shall be much pleased.

In conclusion, I can do no better than to extend to you a most hearty and cordial invitation to make the fullest use of your new possession. The more you use it, the better we shall be pleased, for a library building is not primarily a beautiful piece of architecture set in your midst to be admired. It may be and we hope is all of that, but it is something more, something of far greater importance. It is a repository of books written by the great men and women who have preceded us or who are still working among us and whose thoughts set down in print are ready to enter into our lives and make them broader, more kindly and of greater value to ourselves and to all those with whom we come in contact.