

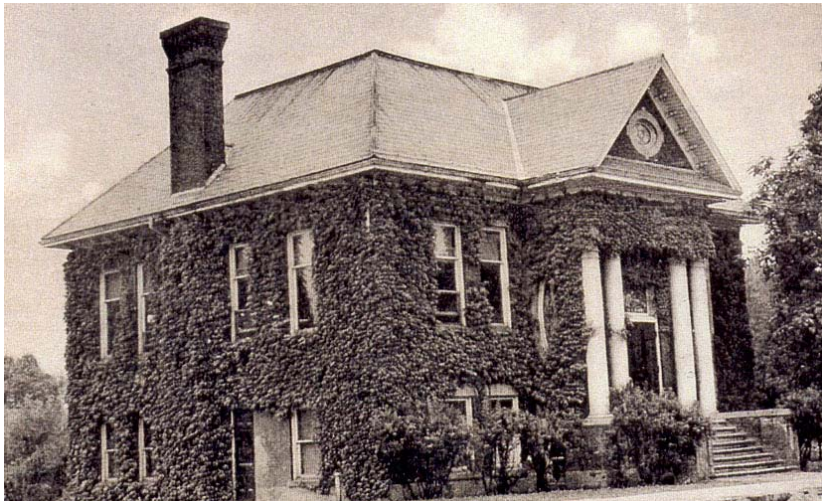
# Carnegie Public Library

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Location: 108 Main St South, Seaforth, Ontario

Year built: 1913

SEAFORTH'S CARNEGIE PUBLIC LIBRARY was built in 1912-13 with a \$10,000 grant from the Carnegie Foundation. Although the exterior designs of Carnegie libraries were not dictated by condition of the grant, they do have common elements, primarily based on Beaux-Arts ideas of symmetry and design used for civic buildings like town halls, post offices and banks in Ontario from the 1880s. Most architects followed this classical style, which included an exposed basement, a centrally located main entrance, a classically-columned portico, and a symmetrical arrangement of windows.



The ivy-covered  
façade of Seaforth  
Carnegie Library.

John Finlayson was the architect-builder of Seaforth's Carnegie public Library. He waived his fee so the town was able to purchase the lot at the corner of Main and George Streets. Harry (or Henry) Edge, who lived in what is now the Lavoie House, began work on the building in 1912.

James Bertram, who oversaw the Andrew Carnegie Foundation grants program, had a personal tie to Seaforth; his wife, Janet Ewing, was a native of Seaforth (Bertram and his wife are buried in the Maitlandbank Cemetery.)

Libraries in Ontario evolved in the 1850s from subscription or Mechanics' Institute libraries. Seaforth Mechanics' Institute and Library Association was incorporated in 1869, having moved to Seaforth from Harpurhey. It had a membership of 200. From 1878 on, the Mechanics' Institute provided books and a reading room with billiards

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and games at the back of room. Few small town libraries had permanent facilities at this time.

The Free Libraries Act was passed in 1882. The Mechanics' Institute Library was renamed the Seaforth Public Library. In 1894, the library moved to a room in the newly completed Town Hall.

William F. Luxton, who was for a short time between 1869-70 the publisher of the *Seaforth Expositor*, was the librarian for the Mechanics' Institute and Library Association. William Moore followed Luxton as librarian and held office for many years. The next librarian, John Thompson, died at age 30 of typhoid. On September 17, 1907, his sister, Greta Thompson, who had assisted him, took his place. She continued in the job for the next 50 years.



The library once had a tennis court on the side lawn. When this photograph was taken the Main Street was

Between 1901 and 1923, a total of 125 Carnegie libraries were built in Canada, 111 of them in Ontario. On April 1912, Seaforth received promise of a grant from Carnegie Foundation.

In 1967, the Seaforth Public Library joined the Huron County Library which serves all municipalities in the County from 11 main branch libraries. Seaforth Public Library is a major reference centre popular with local history and genealogy researchers. The library has a microfilm reader and early issues of local newspapers

and the Huron County Census on microfilm, among other materials available to researchers. An on-line catalogue is in the works.

Renovations were made to the building in 1984, and again in 1995, modernizing it and adding wheelchair accessibility. Today, the library has a Community Access Program (CAP) providing free internet training and access, and a cybercamp for kids. There are Noon and Evening book clubs and a Friday morning story hour for pre-schoolers.

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