

Grace Taber

Grace Taber was born in Lincolnville, ME on August 23, 1873. Her family arrived in South Riverside on October 20, 1887¹ and settled in one of the first houses built in the burgeoning town. The Taber Family quickly joined the Congregational Church and immersed themselves in supporting the community through the work of the church. Grace was a charter member of the Senior Endeavor Society², a forerunner to youth fellowship, she chaired the Mission Committee³, and represented Corona at the State Christian Endeavor Conventions⁴.

Through her involvement in the Congregational Church she helped fundraise for the Y.M.C.A.⁵ and was involved in the development of the Women's Christian Temperance Union⁶ (WCTU). A precursor the first library, the Reading Room, was a free public space for people to meet, relax and attend lectures. Through the WCTU, Grace helped organize and participated in socials, shows, and donation drives⁷ to expand the Y.M.C.A.'s Reading Room into a library. The WCTU cultivated the first collection of books, magazines and newspapers made freely available through the Reading Room⁸. Members volunteered to staff the space and were responsible for maintaining the collection of 438 books⁸.

Interest in developing a formal free public library began to grow as Corona approached the end of the 19th-century. The Town Improvement Association wrote to Andrew Carnegie for funding for a library. The request was denied for multiple reasons; the current Reading Room was wholly funded by donations and operated by volunteers, the City of Corona was not connected to the development and maintenance of the Room, and a Librarian had never been appointed¹⁰.

In 1900, the City pledged financial support for the library and an election was held to select the first Board of Trustees, the governing body who would be responsible for selecting the first City Librarian and establishing library policy¹¹. On April 23, 1900, the Board of Trustees selected Grace Taber¹² as the first Librarian. Her active involvement in the WCTU, fundraising activities and leadership roles in various youth groups within the Congregational Church, made her a natural choice for the position. She would be responsible for developing the collection, training staff, writing reports and working with the Board to ensure the Reading Room would be transformed into a public library. When the Librarian and Board of Trustees contacted the Mr. Carnegie in 1905 about funding for a library building, the request was granted¹³.

Grace Taber oversaw the move of the library from two-rooms of rented space at the Bank Building, to the Carnegie Library in 1905. During her fourteen-year tender as City Librarian, the Reading Room developed into a free public library with meeting spaces, a classroom book collection and a Children's literature collection¹⁴. Under her guidance the library collection grew from 438¹⁵ to 6,977¹⁶ titles and 2640% in circulation and a 351% increase in card registration.

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