

The Newsletter of the Friends of the Camden Archives and Museum 1314 Broad Street Camden, SC 29020



Preserving the past for the future

Volume 16 - Number 1

November 2014

Sadie's saga

Camden's Carnegie Public Library Celebrates Centennial

(2015 marks the 100th anniversary of Camden's Carnegie Public Library. Known as Camden Public Library, it served in its library capacity until 1973, when the city and county public libraries combined and moved to another facility. The city of Camden made the Carnegie Library "The Camden Archives," a department of the city government. The Centennial Exhibit entitled "100 Years: Camden's Carnegie Library" opens on Jan. 23, 2015 and continues through June 30.)

BY KATHERINE H. RICHARDSON
Archives Director

One hundred years ago in 1915, 1314 Broad Street was a construction site.

Excavators and bricklayers, carpenters and heating contractors were busy at their task of building Camden's first city library.

It had been an arduous journey getting to that point. That journey began in 1914, as best we can reckon, at a lecture to the Kershaw County Teachers Institute.

In all of the factors leading up to the acquisition and completion of the Camden Public Library there is one constant – Sarah "Sadie" Kennedy Von Tresckow.

Interest in public libraries was at an all-time high in the early 1900s. During the 1800s library societies had been established in many communities of the state, but these were "subscription" libraries which required membership for access to the holdings.



Illustrated are a color rendering of Camden's original Carnegie library as depicted on an old post card and an old black and white photo of the building as it looked circa 1915.



Most of those were destroyed or confiscated by Union troops during the Civil War – only the Charleston and Georgetown library societies survived.

Robert MacMillan Kennedy, the head librarian at the University of South Carolina was a leader in the push for development of public libraries in our state. He was also our own R.M. Kennedy of the well-loved and used Historic Camden volumes by Kirkland and Kennedy. Kennedy was a Camden native and a cousin of Von Tresckow.

In 1914, Kennedy presented a program to the Kershaw County Teachers Institute. No doubt, Von Tresckow, a teacher of long standing in our community, attended that program. By July 9,

1914, she was at work on the library acquisition as president of the Camden Civic League.

Library campaign launched

Her files on the public library for Camden begin with a letter of endorsement from the Camden Chamber of Commerce. It instructs, "That the secretary inform Mrs. E. C. Von Tresckow that we, the members

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The Ross E. Beard Collection: From concept to reality

(Editor's note: The following article was originally published in the fall 2014 edition of The Carologue magazine.

It is being reprinted with permission for our readers.)

BY RICKIE GOOD

Archives Curator of Collections

As a long-time collector, Ross Beard sought out every gun show, antique sale, auction, flea market, specialty store, and hole-in-the-wall that he could in the hopes of finding that one special item that would add to his internationally known collection.

From the age of 10, when his godfather Melvin Purvis gave him his first collectable firearm, to the present, Ross' life has been enriched by his pursuit of the rare or unique. According to Beard, the "most fun in my life is because of the people I met and the wonderful stories I heard."

Beard's life as a world traveling businessman enabled him to look for and find unusual pieces while creating a wide-ranging network of friends, associates, and fellow collectors. It is these stories that Beard loves to relate and every piece in Beard's collection has a story to tell.

Born in 1929, Beard lived in Florence until the early 1950s. During World War II, Beard served with the Civil Air Patrol as an (under age) observer. He joined the Army and served in the military from 1951 to 1953. After leaving the Army, he moved to Camden to work for the E. I. DuPont de Nemours Company in the production planning and control department.

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Drawing of Camden Archives and Museum by
Camden Architect Henry D. Boykin

Photographs courtesy of
Camden Archives and Museum
Katherine H. Richardson

Friends of the Camden Archives and Museum is a membership organization concerned with supporting programs, protecting a continually growing collection, and expanding the facility. The purpose of the Archives and Museum is to collect, organize, preserve, and make items of historical interest related to Camden and the surrounding areas available to the public.

The Camden Archives and Museum newsletter is published twice a year.

Editor

Ed Garrison

Writers this issue

Katherine H. Richardson
Rickie A. Good

Story ideas, suggestions, and comments are welcomed and encouraged.

Camden Archives and Museum
1314 Broad Street
Camden, SC 29020
(803) 425-6050
www.camdenarchives.org

Museum Hours

Monday-Friday 8 am - 5 pm
Saturdays 10 am - 4 pm

Free admission

From the Chairman

Dear Friends:

Thank you for taking a few moments to see how your Archives is progressing. We are all very proud of our newsletter and the folks, both staff and Friends board members Ed Garrison and Mary Ann Blaskowitz, who take the time to educate and inform.

Since we're nearing the end of 2014, I encourage each of you renew your membership. You are personally driving the Archives to new levels of excellence.

See you at the Archives,

Best regards,
Steve Van Horn

Granted

South Carolina awards Friends \$20,000 matching grant

In the last newsletter we reported a grant application for the Camden Archives and Museum had been submitted to the S.C. Department of Parks Recreation and Tourism for marketing the Archives during 2014-15. We are happy to say the application was successful and the Friends of the Archives and Museum was awarded a \$20,000.00 matching grant in May.

Thus far it has been used for two Interstate billboards featuring the Beard Collection. An ad on the travel page of the November issue of Southern Living magazine was purchased and another featuring the Centennial exhibit will be placed in all four regional issues in January.

Coupled with the city of Camden also receiving a matching grant to market Camden as a tourist destination, the Archives is getting double coverage.

The city grant has paid for eight additional Interstate billboards illustrating why people should come see Camden – "History & Heritage," "Antiques & Boutiques," "Artisans & Eateries," and "Dress Up & Horse Around."

These grants come at an opportune time which coincides with the city and county hiring the new tourism development director, Susan Sale.

Thanks to the Friends for sponsoring the Archives and Museum's grant! Last year's billboards about the Beard Collection have significantly increased visitation.

Camden Archives and Museum Calendar of Events

Now through January 9 - Exhibit: "In the Heart of the Pines: Camden during the Hotel Era, 1884-1941," in the Whiteley Room. Free and open to the public.

January 23, 2015 through June 30, 2015 - Exhibit: "100 Years: Camden's Carnegie Library." Come help us celebrate the centennial of Camden's Carnegie Public Library, now known as the Camden Archives and Museum! Free and open to the public. Reception date to be announced.

August 1, 2015 through October 31, 2015 - Exhibit: "The American Revolutionary War in South Carolina." A traveling exhibit from the South Carolina State Museum. Camden is featured prominently in this new traveling exhibit. Free and open to the public.

Ongoing - Exhibit: The Ross E. Beard Collection. This popular exhibit changes as time passes. Come take a look!

Small exhibits in the museum cases change periodically. Just displayed is a World War I exhibit in honor of Armistice (Veterans) Day. Come see how Camden's residents participated in The Great War.

Sadie's saga –

Continued from page 1

of the Camden Chamber of Commerce, endorse her public spirit in this matter and assure her of our willingness and desire to co-operate with her in securing this library for Camden.”

By July 16, she had contacted the Latta Carnegie Library to ask about their library and the library grants from the Carnegie Corporation. W. C. Allen suggested she contact their architects, Wilson and Sompayrac, in Columbia to get started on preliminary plans.

A July 22 letter to the Carnegie Corporation indicated she had already begun correspondence with them. By that date she had convinced city council to support a \$5,000 building grant with an annual income of \$500 per year. Von Tresckow did not dally when she had her mind made up!

The Carnegie Corporation's philanthropic cause between 1883 and 1929 was funding public libraries all over the world. Andrew Carnegie, a Scottish native, built the first Carnegie library in his hometown of Dunfermline, Scotland. He believed that knowledge should be available for those who wanted to help themselves.

Books had been very important to him as he grew up in Allegheny, Pa.; his first American public library was built in Braddock, Pa. near one of his steel mills. In all, 1,689 libraries were constructed in the United States with Carnegie funds.

Obtaining those Carnegie funds was an exacting process. There were only four requirements: 1.) demonstration of the need for a public library; 2.) provide the building site; 3.) annually provide 10% of the library's construction cost to operate the library; and 4.) provide free service to all.

Dealing with Carnegie's secretary, James Bertram, was the tricky part of the grant. Bertram held the reins for approval of the design and whether it was appropriate for the location. He could be, shall we put it, “testy.”

Classic building sought

The Camden plans were originally based on the \$5,000 Carnegie Library at Latta, which was a very plain building compared to other Carnegie structures. The local “Library Committee” preferred changes to the Latta plan to accommodate Camden's needs for a more classic looking building.

The massing of the two buildings is the same. However, the Camden Library Committee preferred a recessed front door, which created a front porch and added a two-part flight of steps with a landing midway up.

In the front gable and on the cornices they requested egg and dart and dentil molding. They separated the windows and added a keystone above each. The stringcourse near the foundation of the building was made more substantial. The icing on the cake was the two Ionic columns flanking the front door. They also added a small rear extension which included a small main floor bathroom and a closet.

On top of that, they proposed to build the library on a raised terrace which elevated the building from ground level some four feet. An article in the paper stated, “The members of the League were delighted with the plans which incorporate the simplicity which Mr. Carnegie demands and the colonial style of architecture so suitable to Camden and the site chosen.” It was to be a grand little building for Camden.

James Bertram didn't yet know in September of 1914, when he acknowledged receipt of Camden's application, that he had met his match – Sadie Kennedy Von Tresckow!

Von Tresckow knew what she wanted and that was what she was going to get!

By November, Wilson and Sompayrac presented revised floor plans and they had been sent to Bertram for approval. Then, on Jan. 5, 1915 came the first bomb shell from Bertram. He wrote, “Dear Madam ... The plans are not suitable in several respects ... the monumental and probably expensive entrance feature that you have on the plans does not seem appropriate or necessary for a five thousand dollar building... Similarly, there is no adequate return in accommodation or necessity for the expense of the extension behind the main block. The toilet ... can be in the basement.”

Camden City Council had only been able to approve the 10% operating costs for a \$5,000 building because it was financially strained after the unexpected expense of building a water and light plant for the city.

Sadie states her case

Von Tresckow replied to Bertram after a month, “... The square we propose giving [for the library] is the handsomest one [in] town; 200 feet by 200 feet; in the heart of the town between the High and Grammar schools. Since we are giving such a choice position we felt warranted to make the frontage a little more ornamental than the Latta Library.

“Council refused the plan of the Latta Library. Mr. Sompayrac informs us that \$5,000 will build [the] Library as shown in [the] plans for Camden; the detailed estimate likewise proves it ... as for the rear extension, of course, this can be excluded and the toilet put in the basement ...”

One month later Bertram sent a letter approving the original plans the Library Committee approved. The columns grace the front porch today. The toilet is not in the basement. It is in the “extension” that was planned on the back of the building. Kudos, Sadie!

All the while, Von Tresckow was ill and in bed. She wrote the architect on Feb. 4, 1915, “I am still under the Doctor's treatment and forbidden to transact business but this is so near to my heart that I am going against orders.” Doctor's orders indeed!

In April she was writing the architect about the lath used in the walls, where the heating vents were located, and insulating the heating pipes. In May she was working on what the new book plates should look like. Later that month she was getting advice on which library cataloging system was best.

In September she was deciding between direct and indirect lighting for the reading room. She consulted her friend who was the assistant librarian at the University of South Carolina about the matter.

Her friend wrote back, “If you could have each table with a drop light protected by a green shade the readers at night would rise up and call you blessed.” The Camden Carnegie Library – Von Tresckow's library - was finished in October 1915.

Library opens in style

On Monday evening, Jan. 3, 1916 the formal opening of the Camden Public Library was held in the new facility. It was a program of musical performances and speeches. All of the tributes went to Sarah Kennedy Von Tresckow.

The article stated, “It was exceedingly regretted that, on account of illness, Mrs. Von Tresckow, president of the library association, could not be present at the opening exercises – the one who has spent time and energy as no one else has for securing the appropriation from Carnegie, who has worked faithfully with architect and contractor, electrician and painter, until the building now stands in its completeness for the enjoyment of the people of Camden. All honor to Mrs. Von Tresckow.”

Captain Shannon said in his speech the building was made a reality by the generosity of Andrew Carnegie and “the energy and public spirit of Mrs. Sadie Von Tresckow ... I take the liberty of saying that almost



Von Tresckow

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Beard collection –

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After 16 years with DuPont, Beard left to direct the activities of the Greater Kershaw County Chamber of Commerce. In the 1970s, he began working for several companies that built shopping malls and high rise offices around the world. Through all his travels, Beard continued to make Camden his home base.

Like many collectors, nothing gives Beard as much pleasure as displaying his collection to the public. His dream was to be able to place all of his artifacts in a central location and have them on display for the enjoyment of everyone.

Although he had placed a large number of items at the South Carolina Military Museum in Columbia, Beard had much more in storage and at his home. So, he began exploring places and ways that he would be able to keep his entire collection together, have it properly housed, and have as many pieces on exhibit as possible.

Camden Comes Calling

Although several museums were interested in the collection, Beard decided that he would like to keep the artifacts in his community. In October 2012, several local business people approached Beard about the city of Camden acquiring and retrofitting existing retail space in downtown Camden to exhibit his collection.

After considering everything that would have to be provided, including a professional staff, proper security, and display cases, another idea was broached. Camden already had a beautiful Archives and Museum building, completely updated with temperature and humidity controls, as well as being one of the most secure buildings in the city.

After numerous discussions, it just made sense to install a portion of the collection at the Camden Archives and Museum. According to Beard, “A deciding factor in my decision to place my collections in the Camden Archives was the fact that the Archives and Museum have an outstanding team of professionals running this facility, headed by Katherine Richardson.

“They have an excellent system of accountability, the best security possible and this team along with the city of Camden officials and merchants are working as a team to make this a terrific success and a great benefit to the downtown businesses. In my opinion this is one archives and museum that is “alive” with activities and programs and is an essential part of the business community.”

As Camden city manager Mel Pearson said, “Mr. Beard is a 63-year resident of Camden. We felt like we were bringing this collection home...” Friends of the Camden Archives and Museum board member John Miller agrees. As a young boy, he well remembered visiting the Beard home and enjoying the collection displayed there.

According to Miller, the Beard collection was well-known in Camden and many of the residents enjoyed tours of the home. Other residents agreed, bringing the Beard collection home to Camden would be a great opportunity for the city.

More than firearms

Although between 25 to 30 percent of Beard’s collection consists

of firearms, Beard is fascinated by all types of militaria and historical objects. At the age of 12, during World War II, he and his friends began a collection of military insignias. With all the service men around the Florence area, the young boys had the opportunity to ask for, and usually received, insignias worn by the soldiers.

Later Beard graduated to badges, ribbons, and patches. Today, he has military emblems from all over the world, including a complete set of Russian ribbons and medals commemorating the soldiers of the “Patriotic War” issued in the 1980s.

The collection also includes a large textile component of uniforms dating back to the Spanish-American War, a Southern-made civilian tailcoat from the Regency Period, and a large number of caps, hats, and helmets.

The archival component includes a number of 19th century letters written to and from South Carolina residents, a copy of a handbill circulated up and down the Wateree River proclaiming the results of the 1832 Nullification Convention, numerous maps, and a huge collection related to David “Carbine” Williams, an inventor who designed the ubiquitous M-1 carbine first used during World War II.

Over the years, the collection had become dispersed with many pieces of the collection on display in other museums and other pieces in storage. For Beard, the time had come to make a decision on a permanent home for the entire collection.

Agreement reached

In May 2013, Beard and the city of Camden agreed on a loan arrangement for a portion of the collection. That portion of the collection would be on exhibit at the Archives until the following May. At the end of that year, if agreeable to both parties, Beard would then offer the entire collection to the city as an indefinite loan. This would allow both Beard and the city to discover if the partnership would be a good “fit.”

Everyone was sure the collection would be of great interest to both residents and out-of-town visitors but there were concerns about the amount of space required for both storage and for exhibits. After the decision to loan the collection was made, everyone involved made another decision – they would “make it work” so that the loan would be advantageous to both parties and to the surrounding community.

For Beard, having a secure environment for his “treasures” and working with a professional staff who understood the needs involved with such a diverse collection and willing to work with him to display as many of his artifacts as possible, was an ideal situation.

Archives director Katherine Richardson believed the collection would have such a wide appeal that it would allow the Archives to occupy a prominent position within the tourism initiative the city of Camden was and is developing.

The logistics involved in transferring such a large collection from multiple locations to a central facility was daunting. The first transfer of items came from the South Carolina Military Museum. In one day, officers from the Camden Police Department, firemen from the fire department, and staff from City Hall joined Beard and the Archives staff to transfer more than 150 items from Columbia to Camden.

As each artifact came into the Archives, city employees and Archives staff tagged, photographed, and stored the piece in pre-selected



On Oct. 19, Ross Beard gave a program on his collection entitled “Not Just Guns.” The program was a collaborative effort between the Kershaw County Historical Society and the Camden Archives and Museum. Sixty people attended and enjoyed the interesting and informative talk as well as viewing the Beard collection on exhibit in the Friends Gallery.

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Beard collection –

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areas. Later, armed with a wonderfully detailed inventory from the Military Museum, staff cataloged each artifact in preparation to putting it on exhibit.

A second transfer, this time from Beard's home, brought another 191 items into the Archives. Again, workers identified, numbered, photographed, and stored each item in pre-selected areas. Then came the fun part – Beard was joined by friends and members of the police and fire departments to clean every firearm. This daunting task was made much easier by the number of willing hands that volunteered to help out.

Soon, the Friends of the Archives and Museum had arranged to retrofit existing exhibit cases and Beard curated a new exhibit that featured some of his most interesting pieces. The display included a 16th century Chinese wheel lock, several Kentucky (or Pennsylvania) long rifles, a Le Mat pistol from the Civil War, early percussion handguns, and several examples of 20th century handguns and long guns.

Also on exhibit were items related to Melvin Purvis, John Dillinger and other outlaws of the early 20th century; a section on Captain Peter Mason, a real life James Bond; and a display of World War II era carbines created by David "Carbine" Williams.

Something for everyone

The Beard collection has something for everyone – everyday firearms fondly remembered by many visitors, one of a kind items with a connection to the famous (or infamous), and others that present the history of the common soldier.

Richardson's belief the collection would draw in both area residents and tourists was born out by the large increase in visitation to the Archives. Visitation in 2013 was double that of 2012 and people coming specifically to see the Beard collection were also viewing other exhibits on display in the museum. Once at the facility, some even made plans to come back at a later time to do research on their family genealogy.

The loan agreement between the city and Beard came to an end in May 2013. The past year had proven that the collection was a wonderful asset to the city. The year had also convinced Beard that his "treasures" were in a place where all of them would be properly taken care of, displayed to the public, and appreciated.

But rather than put the collection on an indefinite loan, city officials asked Beard if he would be interested in selling his entire collection for the enjoyment of the people of Camden and for out of town visitors.

The response was an unqualified yes. According to Pearson, "The

[Beard] collection is the type of tourism asset that is rarely available to museums of any size. To have and own the collection in a city the size of Camden is to have one more facet polished on the tourism jewel that our city will be."

As of July 1, the city of Camden purchased the Ross E. Beard, Jr. collection for the city and it will be permanently housed and displayed at the Archives. After the initial transfers of almost 500 pieces in 2013, two more transfers of over 2,000 artifacts took place in 2014 with more to follow.



Ross Beard talks to a group of military visitors to the Archives about his collection, providing them with background information regarding the pieces and how his extensive collection of firearms came about.

The size of this collection also dictated another decision – the Archives' physical facility will soon be expanded to add additional exhibit and storage space. Not only will this additional space allow the museum to display more of the Beard collection, it will also allow staff to mount more temporary exhibits on the history of the Camden area.

With the added storage space, the Archives will be better able to preserve even more of Camden's history for the future.

In October 2012, a private collector joined in collaboration with a municipality to bring a world class collection to their community. After a great deal of hard work, planning, and compromise, the collector and the city are now poised to embark on a new adventure which, if all goes well, will lead to a bright future for all parties – including the collection and the community which enjoys it.

Sadie's saga –

Continued from page 3

single handed and with very little active or enthusiastic support Mrs. Von Tresckow has followed up this work until this evening the library building is thrown open to the community in its completeness."

Many years later, in 1955, as she showed a visiting couple around Camden, she pointed the city library building out to them and told them that some people call it "Sadie's Postage-stamp Library."

Even though the city library combined with the county library in the 1970s and is no longer within these walls, we think Von Tresckow would be proud of the work which goes on in this building today. After all, her nickname was "Miss Historic Camden!"



Archives director Katherine Richardson, Ross Beard, Camden city manager Mel Pearson and Camden Mayor Tony Scully are shown in front of one of the cases displaying a portion of the Beard Collection, which is drawing visitors to our city.

2014 Friends of the Camden Archives & Museum

This newsletter and other activities in support of the Archives and Museum are made possible by the generous contributions of the following people and organizations:

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Names of donors, memorials and honorariums are current through October 30.

Why you should join Friends of the Archives

With a mission of “Preserving the past for the future,” the Camden Archives and Museum is a treasure chest of Kershaw County history. In its beautiful expanded facility, it offers visitors an opportunity to explore a wealth of artifacts, displays, documents, records and various other historical research materials.

What happens at the Archives?

With funding from the City of Camden and support from the Friends of the Archives organization, the Archives staff collects, preserves and makes accessible items of importance to the history of the area. Artifacts in the museum represent a diverse collection of items relating to cultural heritage.

The Camden Archives and Museum is recognized throughout South Carolina and the Southeast as having one of the best research libraries for genealogical research. It houses a diverse collection of books, microfilm, maps, files, periodicals and general reference materials which will aid visitors in their research for ancestry.

What is found in the Archives?

The Archives also has a growing collection of photographs and is also the repository for a number of city-related records, including city minutes, early ordinance and many other miscellaneous records. Census records, publications, cemetery surveys, local newspapers, vertical files and SC Death Certificates from 1915-1952 are also available for research. The S.C. Daughters of the American Revolution Library and the S.C. Society Colonial Dames XVII Century Library are housed in the Archives building.

More information about the Archives and its collections can be found on its website at “<http://www.camdenarchives.org>” Features there include a list of records available for further research, a Kershaw County time line, local history books and other documents available for review, and an explanation of research services offered by the Archives staff.

How can you help?

You can support the efforts of the Archives by joining the Friends of the Camden Archives and Museum. This organization began in 1998 to encourage and manage monetary donations for the betterment of the Archives and Museum.

Since 1999 the Friends group has raised in excess of \$750,000. Most of these funds were used to help finance construction and renovation projects. The Archives has many other needs which exceed available funding. Your donation to the organization will help provide for those needs.

“Friends of the Archives is a great group of folks who recognize the value and importance of maintaining, in most cases, the irreplaceable. Additionally, we all know that our membership is the only way to maintain the level of stewardship to which the core founders of the Friends aspired,” says Stephen Van Horn, presidents of the Friends of the Archives.

How do you join Friends of the Archives?

You can join “Friends” using the application on page 8 of this newsletter. You can also remember donations to the Archives through honorariums or memorials. Your support will make a difference and help promote the Archives’ mission of “preserving the past for the future.”

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