Hockaday Museum of Art Welcomes Carnegie Libraries Traveling Exhibit in December

The Hockaday Museum of Art invites the community to explore the history of their building, the former home of the Kalispell Carnegie library, through a new traveling exhibit on Montana’s Carnegie libraries. The exhibit will be on display throughout the month of December, as part of a year-long celebration of the libraries, in connection with the release of the book *The Best Gift: Montana’s Carnegie Libraries*.

The book profiles each of Montana’s 17 Carnegie libraries, including the Kalispell Library. Andrew Carnegie, the era’s richest man, provided funding between 1901 and 1922 to help communities build their libraries.

In Kalispell, it was November of 1901 when community leaders wrote to Carnegie’s secretary James Bertram requesting money to build a library. He replied with an offer of $10,000 and the city immediately passed a resolution accepting the offer with all of its conditions. The building was completed in November 1903.

It didn’t take long for the library to outgrow its space. In 1907 and 1910, the librarians requested more money from Carnegie to expand, but they were denied both times. By the 1960s, the need for a new space was evident and the Kalispell Carnegie Library consolidated with the Flathead County Library in a building just across the street from the Carnegie building.

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Meanwhile, the Flathead Valley Art Association was seeking a space for an art center and the former library was a perfect fit. It was named for local artist Hugh Hockaday and opened February 10, 1969.

In The Best Gift: Montana’s Carnegie Libraries, author Kate Hampton brings each of the libraries’ stories to life, showing how they impacted communities. Captivating photographs by Tom Ferris transport us to the libraries’ doorsteps and within. New York Times bestselling author Jamie Ford of Great Falls provides the forward, sharing his memories on the role libraries have played in his life.

The traveling exhibit highlights the importance of libraries, the financial contributions Carnegie made to help build them, their individual architectural styles and the significant role of Montana women.

The Montana Carnegie libraries traveling exhibit will be on display at the Hockaday Museum of Art at 302 2nd Avenue East in Kalispell for the month of December. For more information, please contact Jessica Shaw at (406) 755-5268.

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