

The Wiley College Library: First Library For Negroes West Of The Mississippi River Yesterday, Today, And Tomorrow

BY HERMAN L. TOTTEN

He who would appreciate the history of the Wiley College Library should become acquainted with the history of Wiley College in order to grasp the full significance of the role this library has played in the formal and informal educating of Negro youth for the last ninety-five years.

Wiley College was founded in 1873 and chartered in 1882 (making Wiley the first chartered college for Negroes West of the Mississippi River¹) by the Freedman's Aid Society, which later became the Board of Education for Negroes, and which is now merged with the Board of Education of The Methodist Church.

Wiley College is a Christian co-educational institution named for Bishop Isaac W. Wiley, an outstanding minister, medical missionary, educator, and Bishop of the former Methodist Episcopal Church. He was born in Lewistown, Pennsylvania, March 29, 1825. He became interested in the Christian ministry while a boy, and after joining the church at the age of fourteen, was quite active in the work and in four years became an exhorter. Because of vocal difficulties, he studied medicine and upon graduation became a medical and educational missionary in China. In 1864 he was made editor of the "Ladies' Repository," and during the same year was elected Bishop. While Bishop, he organized a conference in Japan and later returned to China where he died November 22, 1884.²

¹ *Report of the Freedman's Aid Society*, (1873), p. 26.

² *Catalog of the Wiley College*, Marshall, Texas, (1966-67), p. 15.

Originally, the college was located in two frame buildings just south of Marshall city limits. In 1880 it was moved to its present site, consisting originally of 53.3 acres of wooded land.³

Bishop J. W. Walden and Dr. R. S. Rusk were closely identified with the College in early days. That they built for the future is attested by the large influence which the College is wielding today. Dr. Rusk, with the assistance of the leading members of the Board of Trustees, selected the grounds and planned the buildings. The wisdom shown in the initial arrangements paved the way for present achievements.⁴

Outstanding men and women of the church have been among those who taught at Wiley College. The early teachers were called upon to undergo unusual sacrifices because of conditions which then prevailed in the South, but they never faltered and cannot be spoken of too highly. Among the first presidents were: Reverend F. C. Moore, Reverend W. H. Davis, Reverend N. D. Clifford, Dr. George Whitaker, and Dr. P. A. Cool.⁵

In 1894, the Society saw fit to change its policy in the management of the institution, and Reverend Isaiah B. Scott, a Negro, now deceased, was made president. His administration was characterized by increased efficiency in all departments.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Report of the Freedman's Aid Society*, (1874), p. 11.

⁵ *The Christian Educator*, (July, 1891), pp. 206-207.

The General Conference in 1896 elected Dr. Scott to the editorship of the Southwestern Christian Advocate and Reverend M. W. Dogan was made president of the College. During the 46 years of his presidency, he set high standards and kept abreast of modern trends and objectives in education. As a result the college grew tremendously. Dr. Dogan's tenure came to a close in 1942 and Dr. E. C. McLeod became the eighth president of the college. Dr. McLeod's tenure of office was from 1942-1947.⁶

Under the prudent guidance of Dr. J. S. Scott, who was elected the ninth president in 1948, the College continued to move forward in its physical plant and its intellectual and spiritual program.⁷

Dr. T. W. Cole, Sr., who became the tenth president in 1958, is the first graduate of the Institution to be elected its president and also the first Layman (non-minister) to be president of the Institution. His presidency promises to be one of continuing progress, growth, and development.⁸

Early historical records of Wiley College (originally Wiley University) indicate that the central importance of a library in an educational program was thoroughly appreciated. However, the school had no separate building for library purposes until 1907 when a brick structure was made available through a gift or grant in the amount of \$18,000 by the late Andrew Carnegie.⁹

Wiley, nevertheless, had maintained what, to all intent and purposes, met the minimum requirements and needs of the

College in the way of library facilities. According to authentic records, suitable quarters for library space were initially provided on the second floor of South College, one of the twin brick buildings first erected on the present campus site of the Sunken Garden. The collection numbered approximately 1700 books.¹⁰

A report from one of the teachers from Wiley during this period wrote to a friend stating:

"Reading and reference materials were limited largely to donations made by retired ministers and missionary-minded white friends in the North, who were interested in helping to give the Negro educational opportunities to prepare himself for the responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society."¹¹

Many Negroes, realizing the importance of a valuable library, made donations themselves, and at great sacrifices. These materials, to a greater extent than at first consideration would seem likely, from our present point of view, adequately served the needs of that day and time.

Wiley College, as was true in the case of most institutions in the early stages, was established for the purpose of providing Christian classical training; and private libraries of those days contained much that had direct bearing on the course content of a liberal arts education—Greek, Latin, theology, astronomy, logic, mathematics, ethics, and philosophy. Many of the books donated to the library related to these subjects.

In 1895, a large number of newspapers and magazines, were sent to the Reading Room regularly. The library was composed of about 1700 volumes of well-selected books and pamphlets to which the stu-

⁶ *Catalog of the Wiley College*, Marshall, Texas, (1966-67), p. 15.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Catalog of the Wiley College*, Marshall, Texas, (1906), p. 14.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ A letter of Mrs. Earl King to Emmett Scott, (October 14, 1906), in the *Dogan Papers*.

dents had free access under the direction of the librarian.¹²

By 1899, the library had increased to three thousand volumes of well-selected books and pamphlets, and during the year, the library was painted, papered, and in other ways made quite cheerful and inviting. Quite a number of new books were added. The college was under obligation to Messrs. Carl and Jennings for a donation of 250 volumes.¹³

With the continued physical development and expansion of Wiley College which was begun under the new administration of President M. W. Dogan in 1901, the library was moved to more suitable and adequate quarters in Central Building, a \$70,000 Administration Building. This building also contained a dormitory, which was constructed by student labor with funds from church contributions. In this new location, through special contributions, library equipment and materials were modernized in keeping with the educational progress of the times. The "Warner Library" and other Reference series were installed, and many of the outmoded books were replaced by later editions of the type which reflected the social and educational advancement of the previous decade. Gifts were acknowledged as having been received as follows: "Mrs. F. C. Moore, 183 volumes; Dr. M. C. B. Mason, 201; Dr. I. B. Scott, (a former president) 24 volumes. This brought the total number of volumes to 4,516. The library was open every day in the week. Periodicals included 13 Christian papers and 10 magazines."¹⁴

In 1905, the library room was "fitted up and handsomely furnished by Miss Clara King, superintendent of the home for girls,"

¹² *Ibid.*, (1903-1904), p. 12.

¹³ *Ibid.*, (1905-06), p. 14.

¹⁴ *Catalog of the Wiley College*, Marshall, Texas (1895-96), p. 13.

in memory of her deceased nephew, Master Clifford King Williams. (These Homes for Negro girls at that time were supervised by white women of the North connected with the Missionary Society of the Church). "On the evening of the formal opening of this new room quite a collection of new books was added, bringing the total volumes to 5,750 and 500 pamphlets."¹⁵ Among these was a library of 500 volumes donated by Mrs. L. G. Murphy of Iowa. Later, in 1920, the building which housed the library was destroyed by fire.

By 1907, sufficient interest had been aroused by the work and influence of Wiley to attract the attention of national philanthropy. As a result, the efforts of Dr. Emmett J. Scott, a loyal former student, were rewarded by a grant of \$18,000.00 for a Carnegie Library Building on the Wiley campus. Wiley was listed as being "the only institution for Negroes west of the Mississippi River which has a Carnegie Library Building."¹⁶

There is an interesting historical footnote which reflects the social or racial situation of the day: "When it was learned that a 'Carnegie Library' was to be given to the City of Marshall (Carnegie Libraries are free public libraries built with money given by Andrew Carnegie, a Scottish-American Steel Manufacturer. Carnegie donated the buildings on the condition that the communities in which they were located would supply and support the libraries), Dr. Dogan, the President of Wiley College, wrote Emmett Scott, a graduate of Wiley who was serving as Secretary to Booker T. Washington, who, in turn, wrote to Mr. Carnegie on behalf of the College and the Negroes of Marshall telling Mr. Carnegie that Negroes would not be able to use the library if it were located in the City per se.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, (1899-1900), p. 17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, (1907-1908), p. 14.

Thus the campus of Wiley College was selected for its location where all citizens of Marshall, both Negro and White, could utilize the library.¹⁷ This has been the policy of the Library since that time.

Another footnote to race relations and to the concerned awareness of Dr. Dogan for integrity and justice in human relations was connected with the construction of the new Carnegie Library. The Contractors chosen to build the Library were White, but Dr. Dogan felt that Negroes should have some part in the construction of the library. With this the White contractors laid down their tools and walked away because they would not work with Negro laborers. This caused a great delay in the project, but the eagerness of Wiley's students with the aid of Mr. Claude Hudson, a brickmason and former student of Wiley who resided in Shreveport, Louisiana caused the plans to be carried through successfully.

The records described the building as follows: "It is a thoroughly modern structure, two stories high, built of red pressed brick, trimmed with white stone. The style of the building is classic, with two massive Ionic columns gracefully guarding the beautiful entrance. On the first floor is the stack room, lobby, delivery desk and reading rooms. On the second floor is the auditorium, provided with opera chairs, electric lights and a stage."¹⁸

¹⁷ A letter of Dr. M. W. Dogan to Emmett Scott, January 6, 1906, in the *Dogan Papers*.

A letter of Emmett Scott to Dr. M. W. Dogan, January 14, 1906, in the *Dogan Papers*.

A letter of Andrew Cranegie to Dr. M. W. Dogan, March 12, 1906, in the *Dogan Papers*.

¹⁸ Herman L. Totten, *A Survey of the Use Made of the Carnegie Library By Wiley College Students, 1964*. Master's Thesis, University of Oklahoma, (1964), p. 14.

Personal Interview—The College Librarian for 43 years, Mrs. G. H. Mason, March 12-17, 1964.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

The success of the establishment of Carnegie Library made Wiley not only the first Negro College to have a "Carnegie Library" but the first Negro College west of the Mississippi to own its own library.

To assist Mrs. Mason in the complete reorganization of the Wiley Library, the Methodist Board of Education secured the services of Dr. J. L. Seton and Miss Ruth Anderson, the latter who was the Consulting Librarian for the Board of Education. Hundreds of books and numerous pamphlets, tracts, and other accumulated materials which had outlived their usefulness were discarded. Modern library methods were inaugurated with classification, accession, and proper shelving of all materials.

The problem of rehabilitating the Carnegie Library, laid practically bare by this progressive education surgery, was one that, along with other important administrative responsibilities, commanded and received constant consideration from local and general authorities. By far the greater means of restoration had been the help received from philanthropic agencies — the General Education Board and the Rosenwald Fund. From these sources, during the years immediately following the drastic culling process, gifts between eight and ten thousand dollars for new books were received.

The Methodist Board also contributed funds and authorized the use of stipulated amounts from local fees to supplement these special donations. By 1935 the depleted shelves had been filled and the need for additional space was acute. Mr. Leo M. Favrot, then Southern Representative for the General Education Board, along with expert educators of other boards of private and state institutions, became interested in the further reorganization and expansion of the library. The President of the College made proper presentation of the recom-

mendations of these interested groups to the Methodist Board of Education, the controlling body, which readily authorized a follow-up and granted special supplementary funds to influence the G. E. B. grant of \$10,000, which the total amounted to \$14,000. With this money, modern furnishings and fixtures were installed, including accommodations for 120 persons in the main Reading Room; steel stacks with 25,000 volume capacity were added; a store room and cooling fountain were installed in the basement; ceiling fans were installed in the Reading Room; inlaid linoleum was placed on all floors; an indirect lighting system, book elevators, and an interfloor communication system were also installed.

The only College Carnegie Library for Negroes west of the Mississippi and rated as one of the most adequately equipped of its kind, the library became the center for research, collateral and cultural reading for Marshallites, both white and Negro, as well as for people in the surrounding counties.

In addition to its regular equipment, the library received gifts of special materials from friends of all races — local and out-of-town. Among such donors were Mrs. M. Lothrop and the Joe Weisman Company of Marshall who gave original copies of publications and documents of great historical value. In 1940, Dr. O. C. Cox of Chicago and member of the Wiley Faculty gave to the Library the famous "Oliver Cox Picture Collection," a set of original oil paintings. The Reverend W. L. Turner, a graduate of Wiley College and a former missionary to Africa, was the donor of an art exhibit consisting of more than 100 pieces, collected by him while in that country. In the display cases are many lovely trophies won by students of Wiley in various extra-curricular activities — cultural and athletic — extending over a period of

many years. The display cases included honorary trophies and awards to one of the most famous of American Coaches, the late Coach Fred Long, a member of the Football Hall of Fame.

In 1962, the Kellogg Foundation donated to Wiley College ten thousand dollars for the purchase of books in Teacher Education. Also, in the same year, the Wiley Library was selected as a United States Government Depository receiving government publications.

When the library was completed all books were housed downstairs. The upper room was used for chapel, and all concerts and graduation exercises were held on the stage on the south side of the building. After the new chapel was built in 1924, the upper room was used for dances and social affairs.

With the occupancy of the new library, the College further enlarged its range of materials and physical equipment. Books were donated by lawyers, ministers, doctors, and educators. The books were sent in barrels, and those were called the "barrel days" of Wiley College.²⁰

The library contained about six thousand volumes, not including pamphlets. Over five thousand splendid reference books were at the disposal of students. A large number of magazines and newspapers were received regularly. Thus the College was able to increase its public patronage, which, from the beginning included, not only Negro intellectuals, but a number of White readers.

The seating arrangement, devised by President Dogan, also reflected the mores of the times. The young ladies were to sit on the north side of the library; the young men were to sit on the south side. And, on

²⁰ Herman L. Totten, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

Sunday, students could have one hour for socializing.²¹

The first librarian of Carnegie Library was Mrs. R. C. Hunt. She served as librarian from 1910-1915. Miss Marie Pemberton was the next Librarian serving from 1915-1923. In 1923, Mrs. G. H. Mason became the first trained librarian of Carnegie Library. She was graduated in the first library science class at the University of Minnesota, receiving the B. S. degree in Library Science.

In its historical development, as the Library increased its services, so did it increase its staff. Miss Clareon Jones joined the Staff in 1936, becoming the first trained Assistant Librarian. She served until 1948. Mrs. Vesta B. Nelson became Assistant Librarian in 1948. By that time, the staff was comprised of a head librarian, educated at Wiley College, the School of Library Science at the University of Minnesota, two paid assistant librarians, both graduates of Wiley; nine student assistants and four WPA workers.

By the end of the fiscal year of June, 1940, the circulation of the library was approximately 30,000. During that year \$1500 was spent on books and periodicals. The accession record showed a total of 16,318 volumes, 455 of which were added that year. Fifty-two magazines, 16 daily and weekly papers, including daily and Sunday issues of the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Daily Tribune* were placed at the disposal of readers.

In 1964, a study made by H. L. Totten for a Masters thesis disclosed the fact that Carnegie Library contained about 23,000 volumes, one hundred and sixty-four periodicals, subscriptions to 16 newspapers and a large number of magazines and reviews. Its staff consisted of two full-time profes-

sional librarians, one full-time non-professional and one half-time secretary, student help totaling sixty hours per week. The library hours were listed as follows: Monday through Friday, 7:30 A.M. to 12:00 Noon; 1:00 to 5:00 P.M., and 6:00 to 9:00 P.M.; and Saturday from 9:30 A.M. to 12:00 Noon.

In 1965, upon the retirement of Mrs. G. H. Mason, who served as Head Librarian for 43 years, Dr. H. L. Totten was appointed to succeed her in that position. He is assisted by Mrs. Vesta Nelson, Associate Librarian, Mrs. C. W. Brown, Mrs. A. J. Chatham, Mrs. E. W. Sheppard, Mr. O. S. Webster, Mr. V. Prakash, and 20 student workers. The Library now contains 24,700 volumes, 246 periodicals and subscriptions to 19 newspapers.

The Carnegie Library with a long and illustrious history is now memorialized in the new library building, the first step in the current expansion program of the College under the administration of Dr. T. W. Cole, Sr. The new library is named for the President—"The Thomas Winston Cole, Sr., Library," and was so dedicated on May 7, 1967, with impressive and beautiful ceremonies at which the Presiding Bishop, The Right Reverend N. W. Moore, officiated, and which, in the tradition of the early libraries, was witnessed by members of the entire Community of Marshall, both White and Negro.

The architecture of the new building is in keeping with the modern motif. Reinforced concrete is the structural base plan with the exterior walls constructed of brick veneer panels with eight-inch concrete block back-up. The building is two-storied, completely air-conditioned, and is designed to provide 85 foot candles at the floors between stacks. An elevator services the two floors. Acoustical tile is utilized on the ceilings and the floors feature rubber tile. In-

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

terior walls are plastered on concrete blocks with ceramic tiles. The front and back walls, almost entirely glass windows, are covered with sheer drapery in colors of blue, green and beige coordinated with the color pattern of the building. In keeping with modern educational philosophy regarding library arrangements, each floor contains open stacks with "islands" of formal and informal reading centers. The first floor contains the curriculum library, technical service quarters, reference services, and staff offices and lounge. A large charge desk is immediately to the left of the main entrance, serving as the control point and handling circulation of all materials. Opposite it is the periodical section containing shelves for display of periodicals and a spacious reading lounge for the reading of periodicals. To the left of the charge desk is the reference desk. The spacious second floor contains open stacks, general reading areas, typing rooms and a conference room. Individual reading areas are provided on both floors, usually in the area of the stacks, thus bringing reader and books together with relative privacy and enabling the student not only to become acquainted with civilization's cultural resources, but also stimulating him to creative learning beyond the classroom requirement.

The Education Collection, Reference Services, Pure Science and Humanities Collections are on the first floor. History, Literature, Bound Periodicals and Government Documents are on the second floor.

Seating capacity in the new Library is provided for 289 students. The total volume capacity is 61,400 volumes.

The Committee responsible for the planning of the Library was composed of faculty and administrators. The Architects were Godwin & Beckett, of Atlanta, Georgia.

The Supervising Architects were Edward Mattingly and Associates.

There are two expressions of sentiment attached to the new Library. One, is the flower-garden entrance and planter, named for an honored Staff member, Mrs. Frances E. Brawley, mother of the Associate Librarian, Mrs. Vesta Nelson. The other is the marble cornerstone bearing the name of the honoree, Dr. T. W. Cole, Sr., which was donated by his assistant, Mr. B. Gupta, from his native land. The marble was shipped directly from India for the laying of the cornerstone.

The Library Building Committee, The Architects, the Supervising Architects, the suppliers of furniture, all were committed to realizing the purpose of the new Library, that is, to provide more and better facilities for higher education and to enrich the cultural resources of Marshall and the East Texas Area as had been and will continue to be the purpose of the Wiley College Library.

Looking to the future with a view to continuing and strengthening its role as a vital partner in the educational effort of the College, the Library has established a five-year improvement plan. Its goal is to perfect its student services and its technical services. This goal will be reached with the increase of its volumes from the present almost 24,700 to 50,000 by 1973, and the addition of another full-time professional librarian, together with full-time clerical and non-professional staff and with the opportunity provided periodically for the upgrading of library personnel so that they may be more closely related to the academic program. The standards of the American Library Association are guidelines for this future development.

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