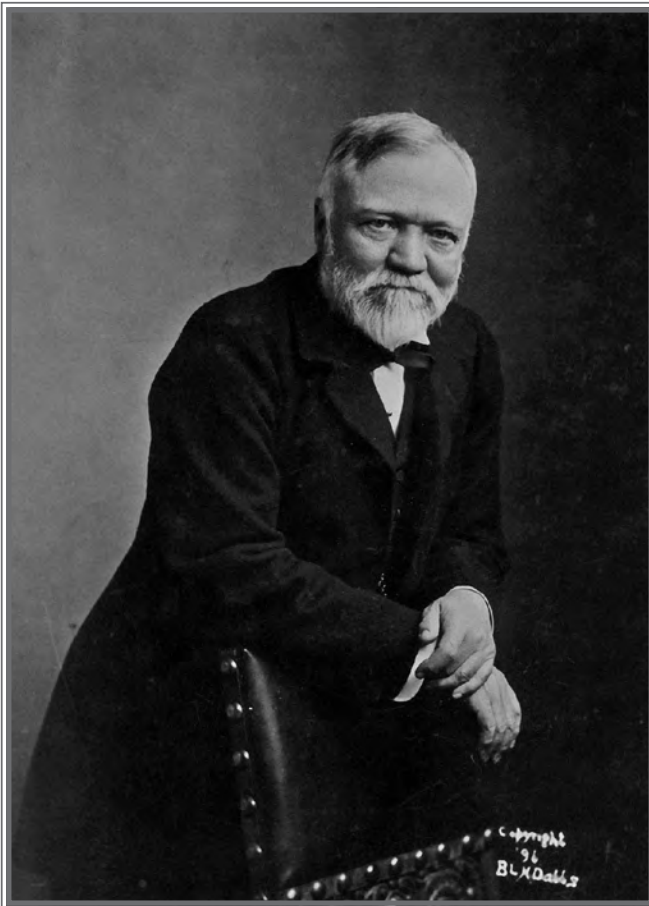

THE CARNEGIE YEARS

*“Pittsburghers Knew I Was One
of Themselves”*



*Andrew Carnegie in 1896, the year he dedicated his
Institute in Pittsburgh.*



The library of Carnegie's mansion on Fifth Avenue and 91st Street, New York, now the Cooper Hewitt National Museum of Design of the Smithsonian.



ANDREW CARNEGIE, one of the richest men in America, was short of cash when he turned down a request to donate a church organ to the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York in 1897. He explained to Bishop Henry Codman Cotter of the New York Diocese, “I am pledged to spend millions and more in and around Pittsburgh, your starting place as it was mine. This is my cathedral work. Some day I should so like to have you go there with me and see the latent desires for the higher things the Institute has called forth—music, literature, painting and the museum. . . . Not less than five million dollars shall I spend on this work, as rapidly as I receive it. Just now I am a little behind on cash. Must concentrate on my Pittsburgh work.”¹

Carnegie’s priorities were clear: Pittsburgh was the zenith of his first experiment in large-scale philanthropy, and his efforts there symbolized the scale of his benefactions in a way that none of his other gifts could. He had dedicated the Carnegie Library in 1895, then the Carnegie Institute in 1896, and by 1897 he was considering expanding the entire facility, which he would do with a colossal addition that opened in 1907. While nearly all Carnegie’s other large gifts could be housed anywhere, this one had to be in Pittsburgh, an expression of that particular city and of Carnegie’s devotion to it. In Pittsburgh he was enshrined in a three-story mural as the Black Knight of Labor, rising heavenward amid clouds of smoke from his mills, while angelic creatures present to him the spiritual rewards of manual labor—the gifts of music, art, literature, and science. In 1913 he was again represented, this time in a bronze sculpture, seated like Lincoln in a classical chair, wearing his business suit and gazing over the crowds entering Carnegie Music Hall. His 1895 dedication speech for the Carnegie Library summed up his intent: “Pittsburghers knew I was one of themselves, for here it was that fortune came to me, and it is as a Pittsburgher I have labored for Pittsburgh. This Institute is built by a Pittsburgher with Pittsburgh money for Pittsburgh.”²

Andrew Carnegie was a man of contradictions, and his need to triumph in business at all costs was balanced and contradicted by his need to give his money back to the working class from which he had sprung. Already by his thirties he was well aware of this internal conflict, confessing his limits and hopes in December 1868, at age thirty-three, in a private, penciled note of year-end resolutions. Carnegie, who had recently settled in at the

St. Nicholas Hotel in New York to promote his business interests in the nation's financial center, wrote:

Thirty three and an income of 50,000\$ per annum.

By this time two years I can arrange all my business as to secure at least 50,000\$ per annum—Beyond this never earn—make no effort to increase fortune but spend surplus each year for benevolent purposes. Cast aside business forever, except for others.

Settle in Oxford & get a thorough education making the acquaintance of literary men. This will take three years active work—pay special attention to speaking in public. Settle then in London & purchase a controlling interest in some newspaper or live review & give the general management of it attention, taking part in public matters, especially those connected with education & improvement of the poorer classes—

Man must have an idol—the amassing of wealth is one of the worst species of idolatry—no idol more debasing than the worship of money—Whatever I engage in I must push inordinately, therefore should I be careful to choose that life which will be the most elevating in character—To continue much longer overwhelmed by business cares and with most of my thoughts wholly upon the way to make money in the shortest time must degrade me beyond hope of permanent recovery.

I will resign business at thirty five, but during the ensuing two years I wish to spend the afternoons in receiving instruction, and in reading systematically.⁵

Carnegie did not “resign business” until 1901, when he was sixty-six, but he was engaged in self-improvement throughout his life, taking trips around the world, owning a newspaper chain, writing newspaper and magazine articles that he eventually collected in books. Gradually he ascended to national and international acclaim as a rich American outspoken on the meaning of American democracy and then as a philanthropist obsessed with devising methods to give away his fortune. In 1889, just before his library and institute began to take shape, he published the first version of his famous “Gospel of Wealth,” arguing that every rich person had an obligation to return his wealth to the masses. His personal plan was to help working-class Americans improve their lot through self-education at libraries, where they could acquire the anglophile culture revered by the Victorian age.

Carnegie's autobiography, published posthumously in 1920, remains an inspirational American story and one of the best things he ever wrote, and like Benjamin Franklin's autobiography, it has influenced generations of readers. Carnegie shaped his rags-to-riches tale to support a philosophy that he had promoted for decades in oratory and articles, employing the same vignettes and themes when he dedicated his libraries or delivered the keynote address at universities, technical schools, institutes, libraries, and

economic conferences. To understand Carnegie's work in Pittsburgh, we have to understand how he saw his life as a rise from poverty to power, culminating in friendships with philosophers, statesmen, presidents, and kings.

BEGINNINGS AND EARLY SUCCESS

Behind Andrew Carnegie's aggressive drive to improve himself and promote change for those around him lay his Scottish ancestry. Carnegie never lost his working-class family's outspoken contempt for the British class tradition of inherited family wealth. In the rigid class structure of nineteenth-century Scotland and England, the inherited wealth of the upper class doomed poor weavers and cobblers like his two grandfathers and forced his father, the political activist William Carnegie, into a life of perpetual poverty. The new steam-powered looms in Dunfermline had made his handloom weaving obsolete, and the day came when William, a master weaver at age forty-four, had to tell his son, "Andra, I can get nae mair work."⁴

The need to leave Dunfermline and move to America, where they had to live with his mother's sister, was a deep shame to twelve-year-old Andrew. After arriving with his family in Allegheny City, across the river from Pittsburgh (now the North Side), Andrew penned long, precocious letters home to his cousin "Dod" in Scotland, justifying new American economic opportunities and praising American democracy. Witnessing how technological innovations changed manufacturing and dislocated the lives of the British working class, he articulated early the classic American immigrant's argument for choosing the New World over the Old.

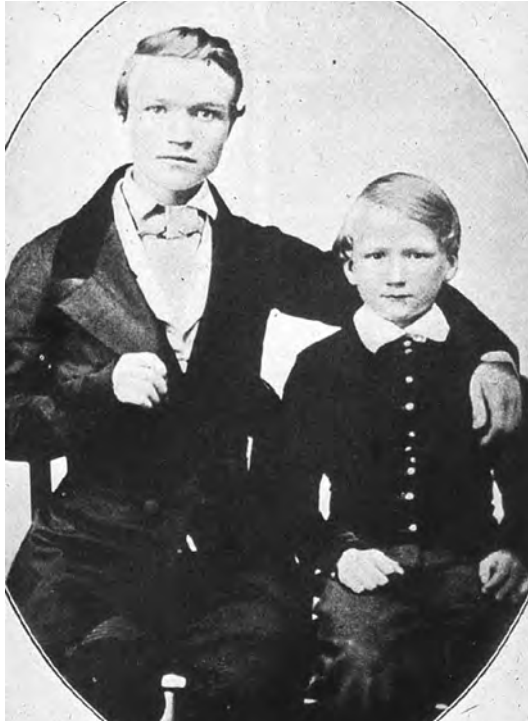
In spite of his son's optimism, William Carnegie—perhaps more of a dreamer than a suitable worker in industrialized Pittsburgh—struggled unsuccessfully to make a living wage as a handloom weaver in America, and his family remained poor. The obligation to support the family fell to William's wife, Margaret Morrison Carnegie, who repaired shoes in Allegheny City (cobbling was her family's trade) to keep her two sons in decent clothing. She held the family together, and Andrew, to the end of his life, regarded her as a heroine for her labors. William Carnegie died a few years later, and Andrew, at age twenty, became the male head of the family.

His rise to success had already begun. At fourteen, he began working as a telegraph messenger boy, delivering messages to important Pittsburgh businessmen. Quick-witted, he had an excellent memory—so good that he was one of the first telegraph operators in the country to translate the dots and dashes of the new Morse code immediately into words, without writing down notes or referring to the cumbersome printed-out tapes used by translators. He took every opportunity to improve himself. When he gained

entry to the theater to deliver messages to businessmen, for example, he stayed to enjoy the language of the theater, especially Shakespeare's plays. A small boy, and only five-foot-three even as an adult, Carnegie was a born communicator who learned early to use words rather than physical force to get what he wanted.

A turning point in Andrew's life—one that supported his belief in the power of language—came at age seventeen, when he found himself forced to pay a fee to borrow the formerly free library books of a retired businessman, Colonel James Anderson. Anderson had opened his library of four hundred volumes to working boys and then acted as librarian, lending each boy one book per week. When he retired as the librarian, he donated his little library to Allegheny City, whose librarian wanted to establish a new fee-based lending policy that discriminated between poor children with no income and poor children who had jobs. Since Andrew worked as a messenger boy, no longer as an unpaid apprentice, he now had to pay a fee, but since he dutifully turned his small wage over to his mother, he had no money of his own. He saw the new policy as unfair and wrote a letter of protest to the newspaper, arguing that it discriminated against young wage earners. His letter got the library policy reversed, and this became his first victory against the establishment. He never forgot this early success, made possible by his ability to articulate his beliefs, and he used the example of Colonel Anderson's library for the rest of his life to support his establishment of free public libraries.

Thanks to his hard work and ambition, Carnegie was soon singled out and asked to be the private telegrapher for Thomas Scott, the superintendent of the Western Division of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Carnegie promptly distinguished himself as a master dispatcher and with Scott's tutelage began to understand the financial side of railroading, eventually investing small sums of his own money (which Scott lent to him at the beginning). Railroads were expanding aggressively in the 1850s, and the discovery of oil in Pennsylvania in 1859 increased the tempo of industrialization even further. When the Civil War broke out in 1861, Thomas Scott was drawn away to work in Washington, D.C., and Carnegie, at age twenty-seven, became the supervisor of the Western Division. His responsibilities included transporting troops and war materials from Pittsburgh to the Union Army. Like other businessmen at the time, Carnegie paid someone to be his substitute as a soldier, but he was injured while working on the telegraph lines, as he tried to pin down a wire that snapped upward and struck him in the head. He suffered from sunstroke, and his health deteriorated, so he was granted three months off from his job to recover and decided to return to Scotland to visit his birthplace, Dunfermline. This triumphant



*Andrew Carnegie, age sixteen, with his brother
Thomas Morrison Carnegie, age ten, as professionally
photographed in Allegheny City
in 1851.*

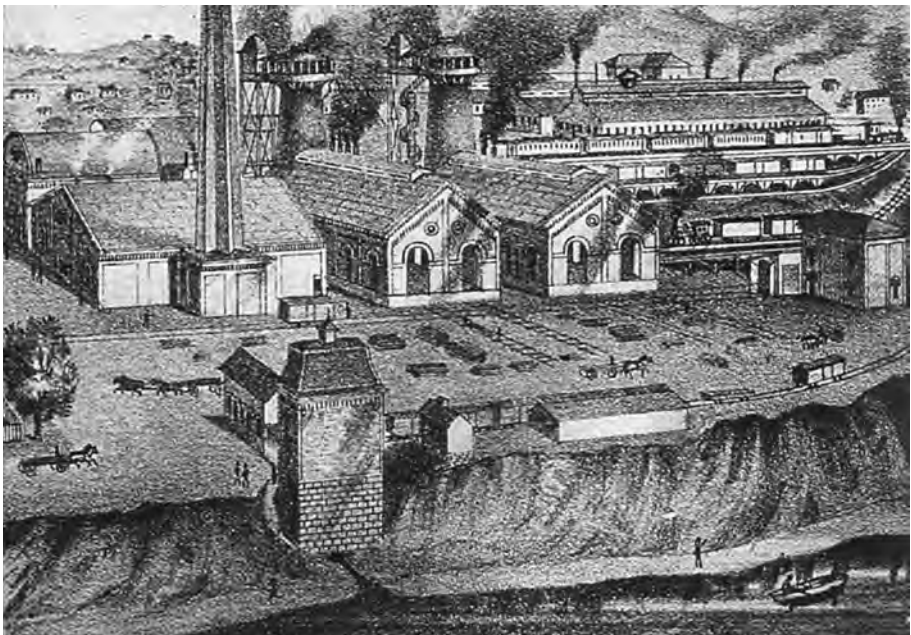
return for a once poor boy whose impoverished family had left in disgrace in 1848 set a pattern Carnegie would continue to follow throughout his life, of leaving business in the hotter months for extended vacations that allowed him to see the world.

Carnegie decided to leave the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1865, instead beginning to use the insider information he had gained from railroad executives and industrial entrepreneurs to pursue success as a salesman and investor in stocks and bonds, including stocks in Western Union. Relatively rich by age thirty, he still worked with railroads but now focused on the products railroads transported—iron, coal, coke, and eventually steel. Repeating the pattern that had led to his own success, he always found bright partners and hired “young geniuses” as managers.

Despite his business success, Carnegie’s scant four years of formal schooling in Scotland had left him feeling keenly his insufficient polish and lack of a university education. As his wealth brought him into increasing



Carnegie in the late 1860s, about the time he moved to New York City and resolved to give up “business cares.”



The Carnegie brothers' first steel mill, named Lucy Furnace after Tom Carnegie's wife, was located in the Lawrenceville neighborhood of Pittsburgh and went into production in 1872.

contact with sophisticated people, he worked to erase from his behavior the raw manners and untutored speech of a Scottish immigrant. He first tasted cultured conversation in the gatherings held at Judge Thomas Wilkins's home in the outskirts of Pittsburgh's East End. He liked debating important issues with cultivated people, and as he continued to rise in power, his new friends were regularly surprised to see that he was consistently driven more by ideas than by money.

After his 1867 move to New York, his love of conversation and debate carried on at Madame Anna Botta's literary salon. The wife of a professor of Italian literature, Madame Botta presided over elevated conversations with many of New York's fashionable writers, intellectuals, and statesmen—the sophisticates of the era.⁵ After marrying in 1887, Carnegie himself used his homes in New York and Scotland as salons for invited guests, regularly inviting interesting people, rich and poor alike, to visit him, often at his own expense. At Skibo Castle, the irrepressible Carnegie had a piper lead the parade of guests to the dinner table every evening. At breakfast they were accompanied to the table by the dramatic music of composers such as Richard Wagner, played on the castle's pipe organ. His wife eventually persuaded Andrew to build a smaller house on the castle grounds, where they could actually be alone with each other and their daughter, but Carnegie never lost his enthusiasm for company. He was a founding member of the New York Author's Club, a literary salon where he regularly traded opinions with famous writers and philosophers, such as Mark Twain. In an era of vast and ruthless wealth, many of Carnegie's business associates, such as Henry Frick, Andrew Mellon, and J. P. Morgan, built exquisite art collections through the advice of sophisticated experts. However, none could articulate their personal feeling for art with the enthusiasm and style of the gregarious and articulate Carnegie, who easily extemporized on literature, art, and science.

OUTREACH

Carnegie's book *Triumphant Democracy* (1886) opened in dramatic journalistic style: "The old nations of the earth creep on at a snail's pace; the Republic thunders past with the rush of an express. The United States, the growth of a single century, has already reached the foremost rank among nations, and is destined to outdistance all others in the race. In population, in wealth, in annual savings, and in public credit; in freedom from debt, in agriculture, and in manufactures, America already leads the civilized world."⁶ The American Republic, Carnegie declared simplistically, had faced two great threats: human slavery, overcome twenty years earlier by the Emancipation Proclamation, and now, in the late nineteenth century, "the millions of

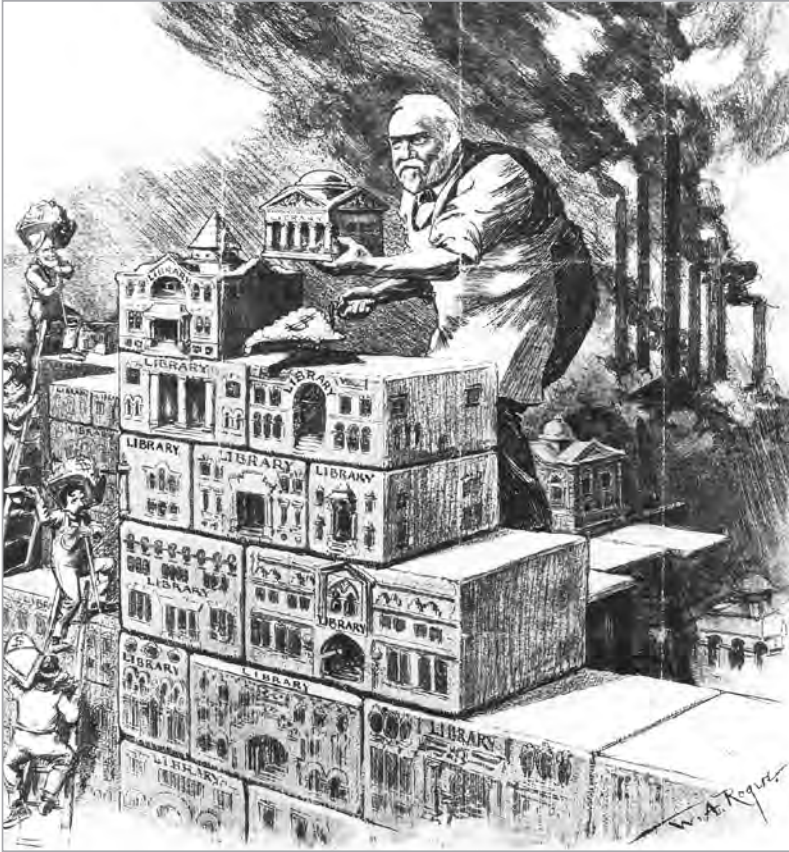
foreigners who came from all lands to the hospitable shores of the nation, many of them ignorant of the English language, and all unaccustomed to the exercise of political duties.” It was this crisis in civilized culture that his free libraries and Carnegie Institute were supposed to alleviate. The Institute, Carnegie held, would be a center of refinement in the heart of an industrial wasteland—a home for scientists, artists, and intellectuals, as well as the common man, where all could gather, learn, and exchange views, in keeping with the founder’s belief in promoting democracy through civilized discussion and debate.

The year 1886, beyond marking the publication of *Triumphant Democracy*, was a watershed for Carnegie in other respects, for his strong-willed mother and his younger brother and business partner Tom both died, and he himself nearly died of pneumonia in the mountains at Cresson, Pennsylvania. The next year he married Louise Whitefield, twenty-one years younger, who had long waited for him while he remained under the spell of his mother, whom he had held in saintly respect. He began a renewed life, returned to health at age fifty-one, with a devoted wife to help him, and he began in earnest to put his ideals into practice.

These ideals were challenged, however, in 1892, three years before his library opened in Pittsburgh, when the Homestead strike put him at the center of a national controversy. At the Homestead Mill, which his partner Henry Clay Frick managed, the workers had struck in protest over a plan to reduce wages. Carnegie, vacationing in Scotland, let Frick do the dirty work of breaking the strike by hiring the notorious Pinkerton guards. Violence broke out, men were killed, and the Pennsylvania National Guard occupied Homestead to restore order. Soon afterward, Frick himself was shot and stabbed by an anarchist in his downtown office, although he recovered. Homestead was a disaster on a national scale, altering the relationship between the steel unions and management for decades.

The relationship between Frick and Carnegie also started to disintegrate as a result of the strike. Frick nevertheless remained on the board of Carnegie Institute until 1899, when he resigned from the Carnegie Steel Company. Carnegie then began proceedings against Frick under the “Iron Clad Agreement,” which guaranteed that partners could purchase each other’s shares at their original purchase price rather than their much greater appreciated value. In the famous personal confrontation that ended their relationship, Frick threw Carnegie out of his office in downtown Pittsburgh and called him a liar. The case went to court, and the two never spoke again.

During the controversy surrounding Homestead and its aftermath, Carnegie’s critics labeled him a sanctimonious hypocrite. To defuse their accusations, he reprinted his famous “Gospel of Wealth,” arguing that



Cartoonist W. A. Rogers pictured Carnegie using workers to establish his own “temple of fame.”

enlightened benefactors had a duty to uplift the masses. His cynical, or perhaps realistic, belief was that most people would inevitably spend slight wage increases on pleasures, rather than on high-minded self-improvement. He held, paternalistically, that he could spend this money more wisely for the masses than they could for themselves. After 1900, his gifts of free libraries multiplied, and a national debate developed about the morality of accepting Carnegie’s “tainted money.” Carnegie’s enemies held that his free libraries were mere sops to American workers and the public, an attempt to win back their favor after breaking the steelworkers’ union and enforcing low wages. The era’s cartoonists and satirists showcased the controversy, the Chicago-born journalist Finley Peter Dunne using his fictitious Irishman Mr. Dooley to caricature Carnegie’s views: “The way to abolish poverty an’ bust crime,” he mused, “is to put up a brown-stone buildin’ in ivry town in the country with me name over it.”⁷

Carnegie's enemies accused him for the rest of his life, overlooking the fact that Carnegie had resolved to give away his fortune long before the Homestead controversy arose. His moral philosophy is usually traced to several of the foremost thinkers of the Victorian Age, particularly Thomas Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, and Herbert Spencer. Carlyle, a fellow Scot, espoused the role of heroic leaders in transforming society, and Carnegie believed in such great men all his life, identifying and associating with them whenever he could. Arnold, the British poet and essayist, advanced a theory of high culture that provided the "best that was thought and said" as the touchstones of education, confirming Carnegie's belief that exposure to literature, music, art, and science led to a higher plane, where "sweetness and light" reigned. Spencer, a proponent of Social Darwinism, verified Carnegie's conviction that human society was evolving to ever higher and more refined forms. Both Arnold and Spencer became Carnegie's friends and were his guests on tours of America. Both too, not surprisingly, found the depth of American civilization thin compared to Europe, but they submitted to their host's enthusiastic patriotism with good grace.

Many agreed with him out of politeness, and few bothered in their memoirs to describe their candid feelings. One who did was his friend Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), who joked with him often in letters he addressed to "Saint Andrew" from "Saint Mark," and always hoped Carnegie would help him out financially, although Carnegie never did. A few years before the end of his life, Clemens wrote in his memoirs, in 1907, "If I were to describe him in a phrase I should call him the Human Being Unconcealed." He added, "He never has any but one theme, himself. . . . He is his one darling subject, the only subject he . . . seems stupendously interested in." Carnegie, Clemens pointed out, kept strict account of the great men who had paid him compliments and always implied that they sought him out, rather than he them: "He is an astonishing man in his genuine modesty as regards the large things he has done, and in his juvenile delight in trivialities that feed his vanity." Of the famous incident in which Carnegie had entertained the king of England (who asked him about *Diplodocus carnegii*) at Skibo Castle four years earlier, Clemens noted, "Mr. Carnegie cannot leave the King's visit alone; he has told me about it at least four times, in detail. When he applied that torture the second, third, and fourth times, he certainly knew it was the second, third and fourth time, for he has an excellent memory. . . . He has likable qualities, and I like him, but I don't believe I can stand the King of England visit again." To Clemens, Carnegie was "always a subject of intense interest. . . . I like him; I am ashamed of him; and it is a delight to me to be where he is if he has new material on which to work his vanities where they will show him off as with a limelight."⁸

Carnegie believed wholeheartedly in benevolent capitalism and individualism. Putting aside those who benefited from inherited wealth and special privileges, he argued that everyone could reach for opportunities in the new republic, but that only those who applied all their energy and intelligence in the workplace and in the world of ideas could succeed. He saw poverty, which he had personally experienced, as useful in developing inner strength (“Adversity makes men, prosperity monsters”), and he believed that the way to avoid suffering among the masses was to alleviate it with legislation and charity, both private and public. He estimated that those capable of lifting themselves out of poverty and ignorance amounted to about one-tenth of the total population—the “swimming one tenth” he called them, people with the energy and determination to get ahead in life. He believed that the social reformers of his day focused so exclusively on the hopelessly poor—the wretched one-tenth at the bottom of society—that they ignored the relatively slight assistance needed to lift up the hardworking and hopeful one-tenth, who also typified the working class.

Today Carnegie’s enthusiasms seem clichéd and Victorian, and he certainly glossed over darker aspects of America’s past, such as the long consequences of slavery. Contemporary critics declared him addicted to “sweetness and light” in his portrayal of triumphant democracy. Nevertheless, his principles were clear, based on personal experience, and he was true to them for his entire life.

PHILANTHROPY

Agencies in the Forward March of Humanity

Henry S. Pritchett

Andrew Carnegie never stopped denigrating “the debasing worship of money,” and after he retired in 1901, he never even visited the bank in Newark where he had deposited some \$350 million in stocks and bonds. “Watch the pennies,” one of his mottoes declared, “and the pounds will take care of themselves.” He insisted, “The man of wealth who dies rich dies disgraced.” After he sold Carnegie Steel and his other interests in 1901 in the creation of U.S. Steel, the world’s largest corporation, J. P. Morgan called him the richest man in the world. Ready to make philanthropy his first order of business, Carnegie now began to give away millions.

Believing in the uplifting power of music, he gave away some seven thousand church organs and built grand music halls in New York and Pittsburgh. He gave to two-year trade and technical schools, rather than four-year colleges, and founded Carnegie Technical School in 1900, put-

ting it under the governance of Carnegie Institute trustees. He considered founding a university in the Washington, D.C., area but considered the great schools that already had their roots in the area, such as Baltimore's Johns Hopkins, and instead threw his support to the predominantly African American Howard University.

Taking a national view of science, he decided in 1902 to fund a research institution for \$10 million to help the country's universities by conducting primary research under the control of great scientists—Carnegie Institution of Washington, D.C. Among its many projects was the scientific mission of the ship *Carnegie*, built without iron so its compass would register true north, a ship that sailed around the globe correcting inadequate navigational charts to make the world safer for oceanic shipping and travel. Under Carnegie Institution of Washington was Mount Wilson Observatory, in Southern California, devoted to astronomical research. But his gifts promoting “pure science” began in Pittsburgh with his funding of Carnegie Museum and its paleontological research out west.

In Scotland he endowed the four venerable but poor major universities with one large gift: the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland. This \$10 million donation assured the financial stability of the centuries-old seats of learning at St. Andrews, Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Aberdeen. He gave another \$10 million to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and in 1905 he donated \$13 million to create the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, which, in 1917, produced the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America (TIAA), still the backbone of retirement funds for teachers and other nonprofit employees. He created the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission in 1904 (its U.S. headquarters in Pittsburgh) with \$5 million, to reward ordinary citizens who risked their own lives to save the lives of others.

By 1905, his single-handed efforts to give away his money wisely were frustrating him, and he was tired of being constantly pilloried by the media. Conservatives criticized him as a socialist for his support of two-year schools and black colleges, while liberals accused him of trying to prostitute colleges and scientific research by making institutions indebted to him. In 1906, he complained to a friend: “The final dispensation of one's wealth preparing for the final exit is a heavy task—all sad. . . . You have no idea of the strain I have been under.”⁹ While giving a speech at the jubilee celebration of an institute in Scotland, he departed from his text to say, “Millionaires who laugh are rare, very rare, indeed.” He had given away \$180 million and had just as much still left to give. The capitalist return of 5 percent per year on his fortune was accumulating wealth more quickly than he could wisely administer giving it away.



Andrew Carnegie, who funded the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, is depicted by Charles Budd as the angel of the international peace movement.



The Carnegie Hero Fund Commission awards this medal to ordinary people who risked (and often lost) their lives to help others.

At one point, he lamented that he was doomed to die in disgrace, having failed to dispense his wealth, and his friend Elihu Root, the secretary of state, cheered him by saying, “You have had the best run for your money I have ever known.” Root suggested that he give up this mission as a personal goal and create a trust that would leave the task in others’ hands. Thus, in November 1911, Carnegie created Carnegie Corporation of New York, transferring to it in a series of grants his remaining fortune of \$125 million, noting (using his simplified English spelling system—one of his various enthusiasms that did not catch on) that the money would be used “to promote the advancement and diffusion of knowledge among the people of the United States by aiding technical schools, institutions of higher learning, libraries, scientific research, hero funds, useful publications, and by such other agencies and means as shall from time to time be found appropriate therefor.”¹⁰ He became the president of Carnegie Corporation, and the heads of his various other institutions all served as board members—including, over time, both William Nimick Frew and Samuel Harden Church, the presidents of Carnegie Institute and Library in Pittsburgh. The Carnegie Corporation dominated American philanthropy until the death of Henry Ford in 1947, which led to the expansion of the Ford Foundation for charitable giving.¹¹

The scale of Carnegie’s philanthropy was unprecedented, and in 1915, to honor the anniversary of the Carnegie Institute of Technology and Carnegie’s eightieth birthday, Henry S. Pritchett, the president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the former president of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, came to Carnegie Tech and spoke to Carnegie’s legacy:

The chief causes which Mr. Carnegie has sought to stimulate are these: the promotion of good reading through public libraries, the cause for scientific research through a research-institution, higher education through the Carnegie Foundation, human idealism through the Hero Fund, international Peace through the Peace Endowment, discriminating philanthropy through the Carnegie Corporation; last, and in some ways most interesting of all, service to his home city through the Carnegie Institute of Pittsburgh, of which this great school is a part. These are great causes—good reading, research, education, idealism, world-peace, wise philanthropy, and fittest of all, a ministry to the old home and its aspirations.

Referring to the war that had broken out in Europe, Pritchett argued grandly that while “these are days in which humanity is crucified,” the “constructive institutions which Mr. Carnegie has conceived and put in motion . . . are to have immortal lives. Decade after decade, century after century,

they will make their contributions to the progress of their age and of their generation. They are immortal agencies in the forward march of humanity. To have conceived and to have set in motion such immortal forces for human upbuilding is to become oneself a partaker of immortality.”¹² Pritchett was being grandiose, but his attempt to grasp the whole impact of Carnegie’s philanthropy was unique. At this point the presidents of Carnegie Institute also sat on the board of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and on the boards of other Carnegie institutions, and the leadership in Pittsburgh maintained for decades the common bonds of idealism, internationalism, and pacifism, all legacies of Andrew Carnegie. The broader view was gradually lost sight of after Carnegie’s death, as each institution moved in its own direction, and their common bonds grew weaker.

THE PITTSBURGH GIFT

*It was a combination, as I believe, not before attempted,
of library, art gallery, museum, and hall of music.*

Andrew Carnegie, 1907

Carnegie first offered Pittsburgh a free public library on November 25, 1881, the same year he dedicated his first library in the city of his birth, Dunfermline, Scotland. He wrote a letter to the mayor of Pittsburgh, Robert W. Lyon, offering to donate \$250,000 for a free library, providing the city would appropriate \$15,000 annually for its maintenance. But under Pennsylvania law, despite the city’s willingness to accept the gift, Pittsburgh had no authority to tax its citizens for the maintenance of a library, and the offer could not be accepted without a change in state law.

In 1886 it was determined that the state could pass legislation enabling Pittsburgh to accept the gift, and a city ordinance was passed accepting Carnegie’s offer and empowering the mayor and the presidents of the Select and Common councils to serve *ex officio* on a board of trustees to be named by the donor. Finally, in 1887, the enabling act was passed by the Pennsylvania legislature, and Carnegie was informed that his gift had been accepted.

One of Carnegie’s close advisors, William J. Holland, the chancellor of the University of Pittsburgh (then the Western University of Pennsylvania) and later the director of Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh, advised Carnegie to create more than a simple library. Carnegie thus wrote another letter to the Pittsburgh mayor on February 6, 1890, now offering \$1 million, pointing out that since the city was growing rapidly in size, he wanted to provide a more extensive building that would include rooms for reference and circulating libraries, galleries displaying works of art, assembly rooms

for scientific societies, and branch libraries in the city's various neighborhoods. He suggested four branches—in Birmingham (the South Side), Temperanceville (the West End), East Liberty, and Lawrenceville—and perhaps a fifth in an older part of the city. "All of these," he noted, "should be thoroughly fireproof, monumental in character and creditable to the city."¹⁵

Not everyone agreed that the city deserved such a generous second offer, especially after refusing the first. Carnegie's friend the dyspeptic philosopher Herbert Spencer, after reading in the newspapers the accusation that Carnegie wanted only to build a monument to himself, declared the city unworthy of Carnegie's generosity. Spencer's belief in social evolution inclined him to punish human or civic ingratitude, perhaps as a penalty for a society's failure to evolve. But Carnegie replied that since he sincerely wished to promote the good of Pittsburgh, not his own, he was not at all wounded by the first refusal. Indeed, he rejoiced that Pittsburgh had changed its mind. Throughout his life, once Carnegie decided to support an enterprise, he seldom changed his mind, often adding more funds to ensure its success and thus illustrating yet another of his favorite mottoes: After a decision has been made, put all your eggs in one basket and watch that basket.

Over the next thirty years, Andrew Carnegie and the Carnegie Corporation of New York provided over twenty-five hundred libraries in the English-speaking world, requiring every community or organization that received a library to pay for its maintenance and management. In the long run, this approach revolutionized the landscape of public library administration, politicizing the process. Local officials now had to vote each year to authorize funding for their public library.

Among Carnegie's close associates appointed to the Pittsburgh Library Board were James B. Scott (president), Henry Clay Frick (treasurer), and William Nimick Frew (secretary). Scott was also named chair of the all-important Building Committee, which decided early on that a useful interior was more desirable than a beautiful exterior, a decision that doubtless reflected Carnegie's own frugal views. For the Pittsburgh library, the Building Committee selected the plan of Boston architects Longfellow, Alden and Harlow, a decision that was approved by the board. In February 1894 Scott died in the midst of construction, and Frew took over his position. He reported on the management of the facility at its 1895 dedication:

The several departments of the main Library building are under the supervision of a corps of gentlemen, each selected because of his peculiar fitness for his position. . . . Each . . . is held responsible to the Board of Trustees for the proper management of his own department, and has the sole right to employ and discharge his assistants.



*William Holland, Presbyterian minister, chancellor of the University of Western Pennsylvania, director of Carnegie Museum, and Carnegie's close advisor on the Institute, with a cast of *Diplodocus carnegii*.*

Arrangements have been made with the Academy of Science and Art to occupy and control the meeting and lecture rooms in the Science wing, with the understanding that numerous lecture courses shall be free to the public. Similar contracts have been made with the Art Society and the Mozart Club. The School of Design for Women has been given commodious quarters in the basement, and the Art Student's League has found a home on the third floor on the conditions that the skilled instructors be secured from the best schools, and that male and female classes be formed which shall be open to any desiring to study art.¹⁴

This was truly a multipurpose educational facility with few parallels elsewhere. Carnegie Hall in New York City (built in 1892, originally called the "Music Hall") was also used for lectures, music, and classes, and there were multipurpose educational buildings in Liverpool and Manchester, England, that featured art galleries and museum displays. Carnegie had

studied the gifts of other American benefactors, and he reeled off examples in his 1895 dedication:

The surplus money gathered in one great sum and spent for the Cooper Institute of New York, the Pratt Library of Baltimore, for the Pratt Institute of Brooklyn, the Drexel Institute of Philadelphia, or by my friend and partner, and your distinguished fellow-citizen, Mr. Phipps, for the conservatories . . . , or by Mrs. Schenley for our park . . . or spent by Seth Low for the Columbia College Library, is put to better and nobler ends than if it had been distributed from week to week in dribbles among the masses of the people.

He also brought up Colonel Anderson's free library, which had so influenced his youth, and his family history of giving books to libraries:

Our newspapers have recently quoted from a speech in which I referred to the fact that Colonel Anderson—honored be his memory—opened his four hundred books to the young in Allegheny City, and attended every Saturday to exchange them; and that to him I was indebted, as was Mr. Phipps . . . , for admission to the sources of knowledge and that I then resolved that if ever surplus wealth came to me—and nothing then seemed more unlikely, since my revenue was one dollar and twenty cents a week as a bobbin boy in a factory; still I had my dreams—it should be devoted to such work as Colonel Anderson's. The opening to-night of this library, free to the people, is one more realization of the boyish dream. But I also come by heredity to my preference for free libraries. The newspaper of my native town recently published a history of the free library in Dunfermline, and it is there recorded that the first books gathered together and opened to the public were the small collections of three weavers. Imagine the feelings with which I read that one of these three was my honored father. He founded the first library in Dunfermline, his native town, and his son was privileged to found the last. . . . Another privilege is his—to build a library for the people, here in the community in which he has been so greatly blessed with material success. I have never heard of a lineage for which I would exchange that of the library-founding weaver. Many congratulations have been offered upon my having given for this purpose, which I have declined to receive, always saying, however, that I was open to receive the heartiest congratulations upon the City of Pittsburgh having resolved to devote part of its revenues to the maintenance of a library for its people.

Turning from the library to the art gallery and the museum, he explained his rationale for adding them to the facility:

We now come to another branch, the Art Gallery and Museum, which the City is not to maintain. These are to be regarded as wise extravagances, for which

public revenues should not be given, not as necessities. These are such gifts as a citizen may fitly bestow upon a community and endow, so that it will cost the City nothing.

The Art Gallery and also the Museum you will to-night have an opportunity to see. Already many casts of the world's masterpieces of sculpture are within its walls. Ultimately, there will be gathered from all parts of the world casts of those objects which take highest rank. The Museum will thus be the means of bringing to the knowledge of the masses of the people who cannot travel many of the most interesting and instructive objects to be seen in the world; so that, while they pursue their tasks at home, they may yet enjoy some of the pleasures and benefits of travel abroad. If they cannot go to the objects which allure people abroad, we shall do our best to bring the rarest of those objects to them at home. Another use we have in view is that the objects, rare, valuable and historical, belonging to this region will here find their final home. We think we see that there will be gathered in this Museum many of the treasures of Western Pennsylvania, so that after generations may be able to examine many things in the far-distant past, which our present will then be, which otherwise would have been destroyed.

As for the Music Hall, he pointed out:

It is unnecessary to say one word in explanation of, or apology for, its existence. It has already spoken for itself, and is fully vindicated in your opinion. You know from the public press what has already been arranged, and what the masses of the people are to obtain here, without money and without price. That this Hall can be and will be so managed as to prove a most potent means for refined entertainments and instruction of the people and the development of the musical taste of Pittsburgh, I entertain not the slightest doubt, and Goethe's saying should be recalled, that "Straight roads lead from music to everything good." . . . Let us trust that here, also, the great organist whom the committee has been so fortunate as to secure . . . , and the manager of the Hall will ever bear in mind that there has not been in view the entertainment of the cultured musical few, but that it is intended as an instrument for spreading among the masses of the people the appreciation and the love of music which musical people already possess.

After thanking many on the board, and city officials, and Mrs. Mary Schenley (in her heart a true Pittsburgher), and identifying the first gifts to the art gallery and museum, he stressed the importance of his wife, Louise Carnegie, who had counseled him throughout his philanthropy (and indeed continued his efforts in the decades after his death, in concert with the Carnegie Corporation of New York). "We," he said, now made this gift to Pittsburgh using "our surplus wealth":

I have dropped into the plural, for there is one always with me to prompt, encourage, suggest, discuss, and criticise; whose heart is as keenly in this work as my own, preferring it to any other as the best possible use of surplus wealth, and without whose wise and zealous co-operation I often feel little useful work could be done. . . .

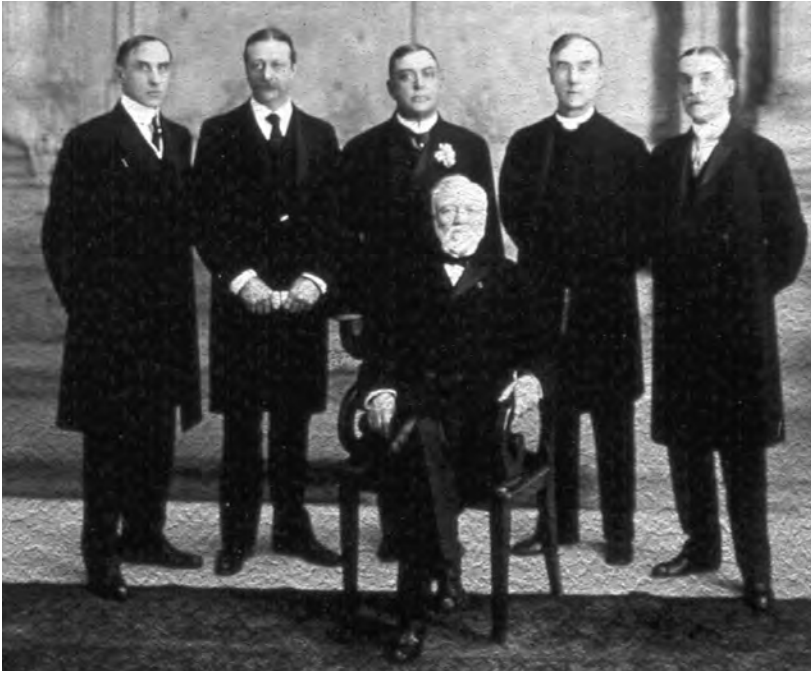
Mrs. Carnegie and myself, who have given this subject much thought, and have had it upon our minds for years, survey to-night what has been done; the use to which we have put our surplus wealth, the community to which we have devoted it, and say to ourselves, if we had the decision to make again we should resolve to do precisely as we have done. . . . We feel that we have made the best use of surplus wealth according to our judgment and conscience; beyond that is not for us; it is for the citizens of Pittsburgh to decree whether the tree planted in your midst shall wither or grow and bear such fruits as shall best serve the county where my parents and myself first found in this land a home, and to which we owe so much. . . .

There is nothing in what we have done here that can possibly work evil; all must work good, and that continually. If a man would learn of the treasures of art, he must come here and study; if he would gain knowledge, he must come to the library and read; if he would know of the great masterpieces of the world in sculpture or architecture, or of nature's secrets in the minerals which he refines, or of natural history, he must spend his time in the museum; if he is ever to enjoy the elevating solace and delights of music, he must frequent this hall and give himself over to its sway. There is nothing here that can tend to pauperize, for there is neither trace nor taint of charity; nothing which will help any man who does not help himself; nothing is given here for nothing. But there are ladders provided upon which the aspiring may climb to the enjoyment of the beautiful and the delights of harmony, whence comes sensibility and refinement; to the sources of knowledge, from which spring wisdom; and to wider and grander views of human life, from whence comes the elevation of man. . . .

We now hand over the gift; take it from one who loves Pittsburgh deeply and would serve her well.¹⁵

After Carnegie had handed his library over to the city, he officially added the Institute as a separate organization within the original building, by a deed of trust dated March 2, 1896. He was actively engaged in its success for another decade, making financial gifts to encourage the health of the art gallery and famously purchasing the fossil of the dinosaur *Diplodocus carnegii* for the museum.

Then, on November 15, 1900, he wrote to Pittsburgh's mayor, William Diehl, that he had read with great interest that the Central Board of Education had asked the City of Pittsburgh for one hundred thousand dollars to begin a technical school. He now hoped, he told Mayor Diehl, that he could bring to fruition a plan he had long nursed, of giving a technical in-



On Founder's Day, April 11, 1911, Carnegie poses with administrators and distinguished guests in the Hall of Architecture. At the photo's far right is the Institute's first president, William Nimick Frew; at far left is Secretary Samuel Harden Church, who succeeded Frew as president in 1914.

stitute to the city, to be under the governance of the Board of the Carnegie Institute: "The rare ability with which the trustees of Carnegie Institute have managed it, and the results which have so surprised and gratified me, naturally lead me to beg those gentlemen to take charge of the technical institute and its endowment."¹⁶

He proposed a plan for the school similar to that for the library: the city would furnish a suitable site, and he would endow it with \$1 million in bonds, yielding revenue of \$50,000 per year. This offer was soon accepted, and the Carnegie Technical School flourished during Carnegie's lifetime, soon bursting at the seams, a major component of Carnegie's Pittsburgh empire of education. The two-year Carnegie Technical School, with its focus on vocational skills and applied arts and crafts, including home economics at the Margaret Morrison Carnegie College for Women (named after the founder's beloved mother), evolved in 1912, against Carnegie's original advice, into a four-year college, the Carnegie Institute of Technology. In 1967, merging with Mellon Institute, Carnegie Tech obtained the national stature it had long craved and became Carnegie Mellon University.



Carnegie and his wife, Louise, wave their final goodbye to Pittsburgh in 1914 as they leave by train from the East Liberty Station.

Carnegie made additional special gifts for accessions by the library, the Fine Arts Department, and the museum, as well as gifts “For Revenue” and “Endowments” to all departments. Still, however munificent these gifts were by the standards of that day, they could not by themselves sustain the library and the Institute in the decades ahead. When Andrew Carnegie died in 1919, his public gifts and bequest to his Institute and library totaled \$11,729,471, and the Carnegie Institute of Technology had received an additional \$7,274,371. Carnegie Corporation of New York continued to support the Pittsburgh organizations, and Louise Carnegie remained active on its board, as did the president of Carnegie Institute, Samuel Harden Church. By 1940 the estimated total expenditures had reached \$13,115,053, including support for thirty-nine international exhibitions of paintings.¹⁷

Andrew Carnegie’s experience in business and his willingness to adapt to change led him to trust the judgment of those who managed his institutions. During his lifetime, he never laid down restrictions on the ways his institutions could develop in the future. He could no more know the future of these institutions, he declared, than he could guess whether his own afterlife would be spent in heaven or elsewhere.