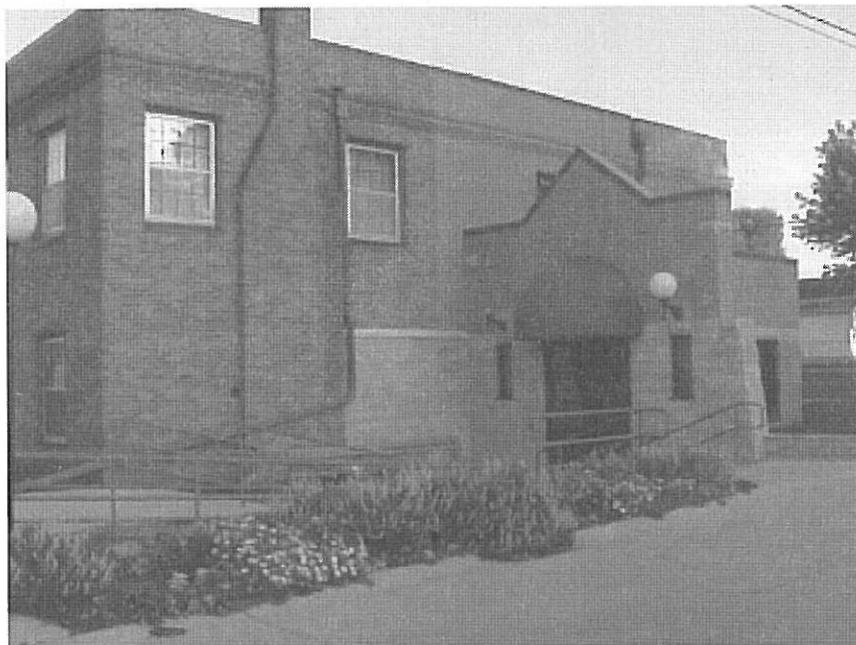


**A
History
Of
Matilda J. Gibson
Memorial Library
1873-2006**



**Compiled by Loy Christensen
Edited by John Judd
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Taken from a history written March 13, 1934, author unknown.

In 1873 the Creston Library was first opened in a building erected at the corner of Union and Maple at the expense of the Burlington Railroad. This company was interested in the founding of a library to furnish a pleasant place for the railroad employees to spend their evenings. The room on the ground floor was fitted up for the library and the space on the second floor was used for entertainment on weekdays and for religious services on Sunday. The rental of the hall was used for expenses. For many years the library was in prosperous circumstances, but as time went on it slowly became involved in debt. It was moved several times back and forth from the north to the south side. The books were given to the Board of Education in 1897. The library was then opened in a room at the high school building. It was used for reference work by the students, but was also open to the public. When the new high school was opened in 1889 the students had access to a library of their own at the school. The students, therefore, did not use the old library as extensively as before. There was now a noticeable lack of reading material for Creston citizens. Two attempts to get a Carnegie library failed.

In 1930 Mrs. Frank Phillips of Bartlesville, Oklahoma, gave Creston \$25,000 in memory of her mother, Matilda Gibson, who had been very active in church and charity work. This money was used in buying the grounds and erecting a beautiful joint clubroom and library. The Matilda J. Gibson Memorial Library was formally opened April 7, 1931.



**Taken from
"Union County, Painting Memorial Library"
Project No. 20,
4 men.
"about 1934"**

The city added a mill and a half to their taxes to take care of the library maintenance. In spite of this, there was still a shortage of funds to completely finish the building in the desired manner. The walls of the commodious clubroom in the basement had been left unpainted. The room was rented out to various organizations for their entertainment and on Sunday it was used for religious services. The money obtained from this rental was used to buy new books and keep the building and grounds in good condition. There never were enough funds left after the necessary expenses had been taken care of, to buy paint and hire the work done at the library. Through constant usage of the rooms, the walls had become extremely dirty and soiled with fingerprints.

Finally some men were hired to repair the clubroom. They first cleaned the walls to remove all the dirt and fingerprints possible. In some places the plaster had cracked and become unsightly. These spots were all replastered. The walls were then given two coats of ivory paint and the ceiling two coats of white after the size coat. The kitchen in connection with the clubroom was repainted a pretty shade of apple green. Organizations had a more desirable place for their parties, thus its rental value was increased. The added funds were also used to buy more books and keep the building and grounds in repair.

Upstairs the walls and ceiling were cleaned and given a size coat of paint. The walls were then painted ivory and the ceiling white. The books and shelves were removed so the walls could be painted. During the time when the painting of the walls behind the book shelves was in progress, two unskilled laborers were hired to do the necessary manual labor to make the space available for the painters. Four days work of painting the walls and woodwork in the library and one small downstairs storage room would complete the job. The unpainted walls in the library were covered by books but the woodwork was not painted.

C.W.A. paid \$198.30 in salaries for this project. The Library Board furnished \$110.20 which was used to buy the necessary materials.

**Taken from an article in the Creston News Advertiser
Tuesday, June 28, 1983**

In November, 1943, a children's wing was added. The present stone-trimmed brick structure measures approximately 66 by 51 feet and is set on two lots.

Phillips History Taken from *Oil Man*, by Michael Wallis

Frank Phillips came from good stock. Both sides of his family provided a classic American lineage including a Mayflower celebrity, French Huguenot and Welsh immigrants, New England colonists, veterans of the Revolution, the War of 1812 and the Civil War, sturdy Midwestern pioneers and a long line of teachers, soldiers, clergy, merchants, blacksmiths, and farmers. He knew he was a direct descendant of Captain Miles Standish. The Phillips and Standish families were combined with the marriage of Frank's paternal grandparents - nineteen-year old Marila Standish and twenty - six year old Daniel Phillips, son of Spencer and Susanna Phillips, hardworking Welsh people and early settlers in colonial America. They were married June 2, 1830, in Pennsylvania. Three of their eight children were born here, including Lewis Franklin Phillips on January 4, 1844. He was the third child and the first son. His parents moved to Iowa when he was eleven.

Lewis was seventeen years old and an apprentice carpenter when news of the Union defeat at the first battle of Bull Run sent him to Des Moines to enlist in 1861. He returned to Iowa after his release from the army in 1865.

Lewis married Lucinda Josephine Faucett on July 3, 1867 when he was twenty-three and Josie was seventeen. They set up housekeeping near Mitchellville. Lew Phillips wanted something more than the prospect of farming and working as a carpenter in Iowa all his life. He moved his family westward to Nebraska in 1872. After two years they had their fill of the frontier and grasshoppers and moved back to Iowa. They had two daughters and a baby son - Frank who was barely a year old. They moved to southern Iowa in Taylor County. Lew and Josie were not blessed with great wealth but they taught all ten of their children to work hard.

As the oldest son, Frank assumed a leadership roll from the start. During the spring and summer they worked on the farm. But when the fall and winter months arrived, Frank and the older children tramped across the field of corn stubble to a one-room school. It would be the only formal education Frank would receive. He wasn't very interested in school.

Frank knew there had to be a way off of the farm. During a family excursion to Creston, the neighboring Union County seat, he found the opportunity he needed when he spied one of the town's barbers wearing flashy striped pants. He made up his mind that he wanted to earn enough money so he could afford to wear striped pants even on weekdays. He called upon a stylish barber and asked him how a fourteen-year old farm boy could become a barber. The man offered him a job and his farm days were over.

Frank traveled around the region working as a barber and then decided to go West. Many things that he saw influenced his future including the mining boom in Colorado, Elitch's entertainment center, opera houses, the excitement of mining in Aspen, the deep depression of 1893, the nation changing from the silver standard to the gold standard and the expanding of the railroad.

By 1895 he was back in Creston employed at A. B. Tucker's Climax Barber Shop. He was known as an up and coming business man. Creston had a population of about 6000. Before long, he bought the barber shop and set up his own in the basement of the Creston National Bank Building on the corner of Pine and Montgomery. He soon bought and set up a second barber shop and then produced a concoction of scented rainwater to sell to his customers.

One of his best customers was a banker, John Gibson, one of Creston's movers and shakers. John's father was a Methodist minister. They had lived in Ohio, Pennsylvania and Illinois. John, born in 1849, was the oldest of seven children. John met and courted Matilda Jane Martin who was born in 1851. After John and Matilda were married, he became a lawyer in Pueblo, Colorado. In 1872, they moved back to Creston where he opened a law office. Later he withdrew from law to focus on financial interests.

Iowa State Savings Bank had been organized in 1883. Three years later, he took over as president and rapidly increased its size. He built a showcase residence on Sycamore Street. In 1877, a daughter Jane was born.

John remained devoted to her the rest of his life.

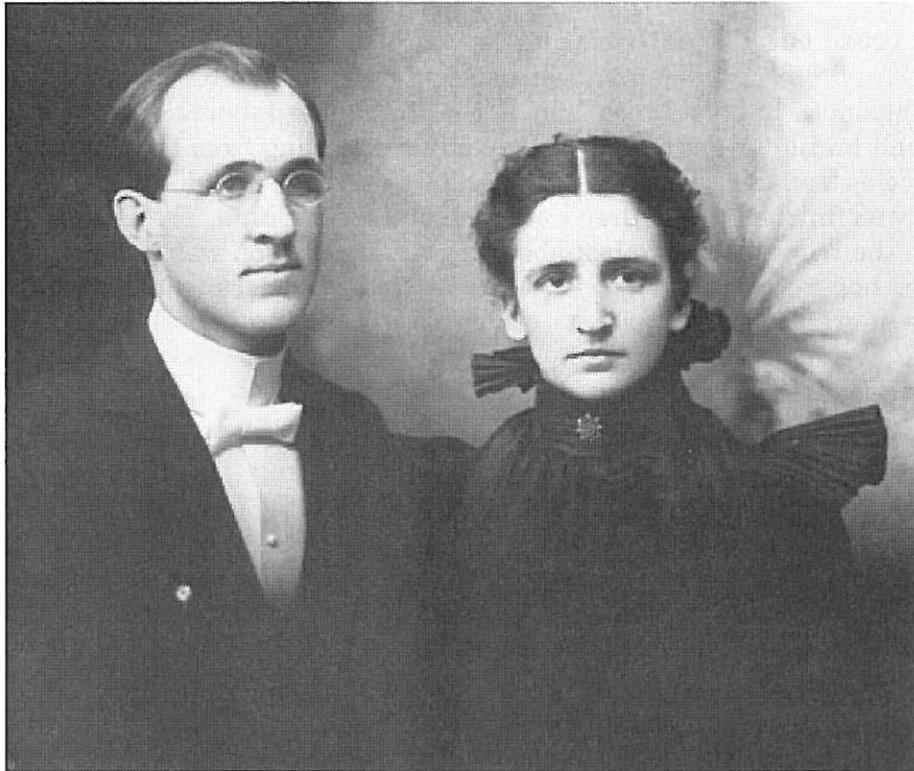
When Jane was eighteen, she met Frank Phillips. Her father was concerned because he had no room in his life for a son-in-law who was a barber. John said that if Frank would give up his barbering and join the bank he would not stand in the way of their marriage. The wedding took place in 1897 before 1500 friends and neighbors. John gave them a \$20,000 wedding gift.

Excerpted from the "Creston Gazette" Thursday, February 18, 1897

In the presence of 1,500 friends and neighbors at the Methodist church Thursday afternoon W. Frank Phillips and Miss Jennie (Jane) Gibson and Mr. Josiah Gibson (Jane's brother) and Miss Marcelene Miller stood before the altar and took upon themselves the solemn vows of matrimony. This double wedding was one of the most notable occasions that Creston has seen for many years and attracted no little attention. The prominence of the parties and the simplicity of the arrangements caused the people of the entire city to be interested in the event and 2,000 men, women and children assembled at the church to witness the ceremony, but fully 500 were disappointed at not being able to get inside the building. No invitations were sent out. After the wedding, carriages were waiting to carry the family and close friends to a quiet wedding supper at the Gibson home.

Taken from
“Frank and Jane Phillips, Union County, Iowa, 1897”
History compiled by Marcella Howe, 1997.

The Gibson home was built at 1104 Sycamore,
but is now the home of the historical society in McKinley Park.



Frank Phillips and Jane Gibson on their wedding day in Creston, Iowa, February 18, 1897. (*John Gibson Phillips, Jr.*)

Phillips History
Taken from *Oil Man*, by Michael Wallis

Frank took some time to sell off his barbershops and then started selling bonds in New England and Chicago for John Gibson's bank. Inspired and encouraged by Gibson, Frank became involved in many ventures including selling bonds to build the Chicago Coliseum, being in charge of the ticket sales for The Ringling Brothers Circus and establishing the Philippine Lumber and Commercial Company in the late 1890's.

Taken from the "Creston News Advertiser", March 11, 1981, Page 13

W. Gibson's business interests took him to the Philippine Islands on several occasions. In 1902, John and Matilda went on one of the ventures, sailing from San Francisco in April so that he could check on the Philippine Commercial Company, of which he was president. After his business was finished there, they were to visit Japan, China, The Holy Land, Egypt and Europe, with the trip expected to last about a year. Mr. Gibson was planning to retire when they returned home. On July 14, 1902, Matilda died of cholera in the Philippines and her husband was quarantined.

John escaped the disease and returned to Creston.



Matilda Gibson Photo

Phillips History

Taken from *Oil Man*, by Michael Wallis

In 1903 Frank stopped in St. Louis to visit the World's Fair. He visited with Rev. C. B. Larrabee, a Methodist preacher from Creston whom he knew. Larrabee was a missionary to the Indians in Oklahoma. Frank listened to Larrabee's descriptions of the Oklahoma territory with its Indians, desperadoes, gambling, etc. Larrabee also described the town of Bartlesville and spoke of the fledgling oil business there. Frank immediately went home to talk about it to John Gibson. He was sure John would support this venture.

Frank and his brother started a bank in Bartlesville and then went on to found his oil business. He knew, because of the beginnings of the automobile industry, that oil would be very profitable. By 1910 the Phillips family had eleven oil companies in Bartlesville. By 1919, Frank was forty six years old and wanting to put his company on the New York Stock Exchange. It was called Phillips Petroleum. By the mid-twenties Frank had a personal fortune of close to \$40 million. An interesting series of coincidences involving the number "66", the specific gravity of the fuel mixture, a cross-country trip on Route 66, and the speed they were traveling, led to the adoption of Phillips 66 as their trademark name in 1927.

To make sure some of their personal wealth was spread around, the Phillipses again turned their sights toward Iowa. After two attempts failed to obtain a Carnegie Library in Creston, Jane and Frank told their hometown friends not to worry. They would just go ahead and build them one. The Phillipses bought a building site at the southwest corner of Maple and Howard streets for \$10,000 cash and presented the deed, along with another \$15,000 in seed money and promises for more contributions, to the building fund. The library became a reality, and the Creston City Council was only too pleased to name the new facility the Matilda J. Gibson Memorial Library, in honor of Jane's mother.

Jane Gibson Phillips died on August 31, 1948, and Frank died on August 23, 1950.

Present Day History

During the early 1980's it became apparent that the Gibson Memorial Library needed some improvements to continue into the future. Not having handicapped accessibility would result in losing accreditation. After much discussion, changing of librarians, changing of council members, changing of library board members, changing of mayors, looking at lots and locations for a new building, hiring and firing architects and contractors, many debates, newspaper articles, newspaper ads and finally a city wide vote, it was decided to remodel the old building.

In February, 1996, students from the Creston Middle School carried the books from the old library to a temporary location, at the corner of Maple and Montgomery, in downtown Creston. The remodeling project began with reinforcing the foundation. A new entrance was added to the west of the building making the building handicapped accessible. The old basement clubrooms and bathrooms became the main floor of the building. New plumbing, sprinkler systems and electrical work were added. The air conditioning and heating systems were replaced. New bathrooms were added on the main floor.

Offices for the staff and storage room were placed on the main floor. The children's area and some computers for young people were also placed on the main floor. An elevator had been added so the top floor was accessible to everyone. More computer space was added upstairs. The book collections were also moved upstairs.

A genealogy room was placed there along with room for ICN. Beautiful woodwork was added to match the woodwork in the original building.

When the remodeling was finished at a cost of between \$700,000 and \$800,000, the middle school and high school students moved the books back. The city approved \$700,000 and the rest was supplied by private donations.

An open house of the newly remodeled building was held in February, 1999.

Librarians

Librarians for the Matilda J. Gibson library have been Mrs. Matilda Bowman, Rose Hill, Gertrude Hutton, Mabel Hutton, Carrie Hutton, Mrs. Gertrude Jay, Bella Alderson, Margaret Ball, Phyllis Arnold, Carole Stanger, Sonja Breen, Diana Dillinger and presently Marilyn Ralls. Many dedicated support staff have also worked there during this time.