

## Duluth Public Library, Duluth



FOR MANY EMERGING American cities at the turn of the twentieth century, the library was a symbol of cultural gravitas. Often imposing edifices inspired by the architecture of ancient Greece or Rome, libraries not only provided important services, they also instilled pride of place in residents.

Duluth's founding fathers had established a book-lending system in 1869, but the city did not have a dedicated library until 1902, when the Duluth Public Library, designed by local architect Adolph F. Rudolph, opened for business. Construction of the two-story neoclassical, sandstone building was made possible through a gift from Pittsburgh steel magnate and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, who would eventually underwrite the creation of more than 1,600 municipi-

pal libraries nationwide, 65 of which were built in Minnesota.

Although the library served a utilitarian function, the building itself offered richly decorative surroundings along with book-lending privileges. A white marble staircase with bronze balustrades rose from street level to the main floor of the library. There, directly under the oculus of a ceiling dome—through which light could stream—stood the circulation desk. A special treat awaited visitors in the reference room: a stained glass window depicting a beguilingly beautiful Minnehaha, the heroine of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "The Song of Hiawatha." Designed by Duluth resident Anne Weston and fabricated by the Louis Comfort Tiffany Studios in New York City, the window was originally created for the Minnesota Building at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. In 1904, a second window designed by Weston and produced

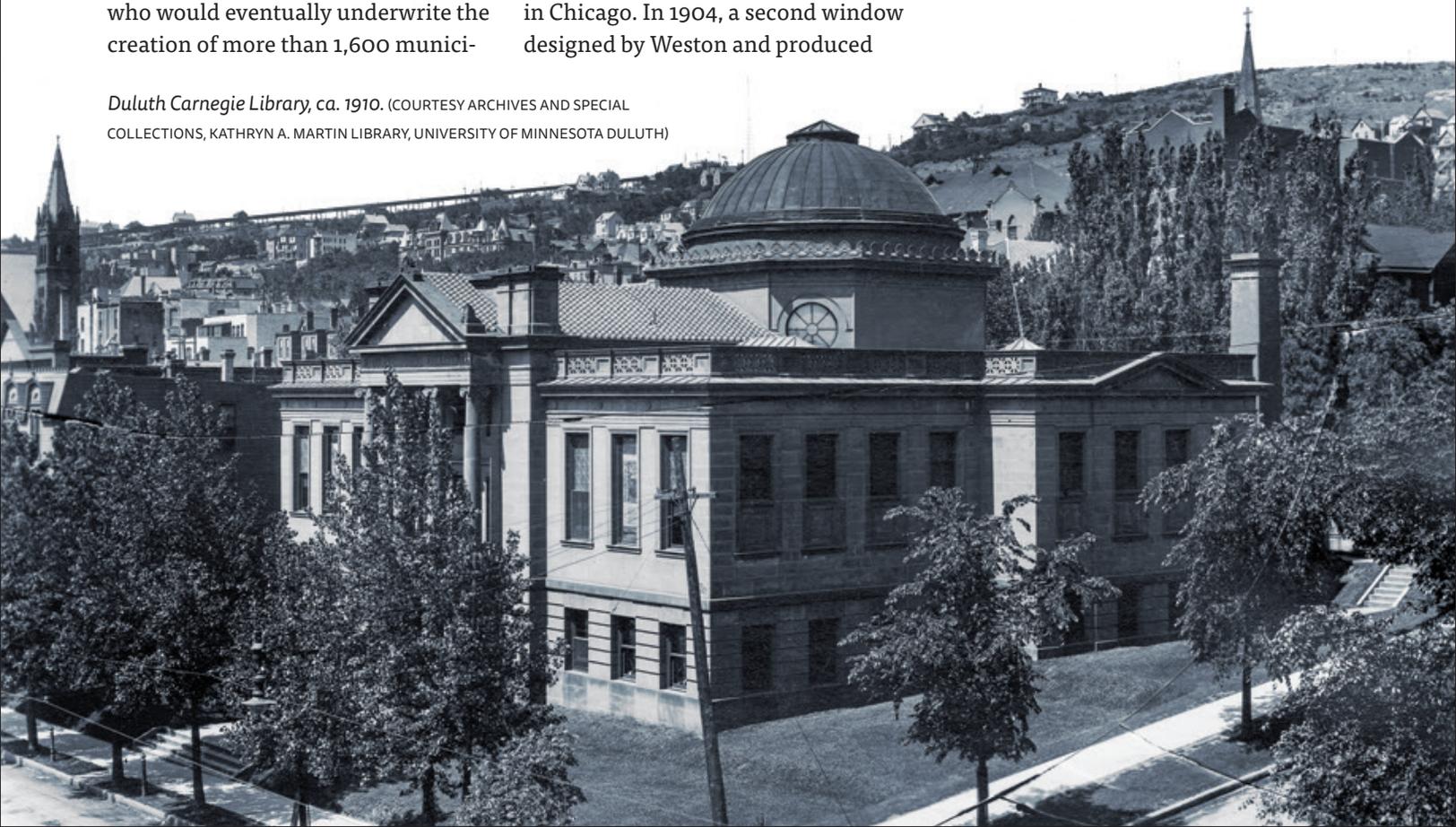
by Tiffany was commissioned, this time for the reading room. Named for French explorer (and Duluth namesake) Daniel Greysolon, Sieur duLhut, the window pictured the once pristine shores of Lake Superior, near which the library stood.

Patrons stopped flocking to this neoclassical gem in 1980, when a new main library was constructed. But the original building—on which the words "Duluth Public Library" remain, literally, carved in stone—still stands in homage to early Duluthians and their resolve to build a better future for their city.

—Jane King Hession

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*Duluth Carnegie Library, ca. 1910.* (COURTESY ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, KATHRYN A. MARTIN LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA DULUTH)





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