

The Wagnalls Memorial Library

Lithopolis

Location: 150 E. Columbus Street in Lithopolis, a Fairfield County village about 20 miles southeast of Columbus.



Provenance: Dedicated in 1925, the Wagnalls Memorial was built as a library and community center by Mabel Wagnalls Jones to honor her parents, Adam and Anna Willis Wagnalls. Lithopolis is Greek for “city of stone,” and the majestic, Tudor Gothic-style structure was constructed of freestone from the quarry that gave the village its name. The Memorial took about three years to build and cost the then-lavish sum of half a million dollars.

Significance: The Memorial’s purpose is to bring cultural and educational enrichment to the community where Adam and Anna Wagnalls were born in the early 1800s. While attending what is now Wittenberg University, Adam Wagnalls met fellow student Isaac Kaufmann Funk, and in 1877 they founded the publishing firm that later became the Funk & Wagnalls Company. Their most important book was *The Standard Dictionary of the English Language*, whose great popularity made the names Funk and Wagnalls virtually synonymous with dictionaries. As Wagnalls’s only child, Mabel Wagnalls Jones spent much of the fortune she inherited to build and endow the Wagnalls Memorial, which has been Lithopolis’s most visible and treasured landmark for more than 80 years.

Currently: In addition to a public library, the Wagnalls Memorial complex includes a public computer room; a local history and genealogy section; a children’s library; rooms for yoga, dance and other classes; and meeting space for civic and religious groups. Concerts often are held in the auditorium, and its art exhibits range from Chinese silks and carvings to Norman Rockwell paintings once used as cover art for the *Literary Digest*, a Funk & Wagnalls magazine. Every September, the Memorial’s grounds also are the site of the Lithopolis Honeyfest.

It’s a little-known fact that: Tours highlighting the Memorial’s history, architecture and art collections are available by appointment. □

The Wagnalls Memorial, 150 E. Columbus St., Lithopolis, OH 43136-0217. For additional information about the facility, its programs and tours, telephone 614-837-4765 or visit the Web site www.wagnalls.lib.oh.us.

