

Charles H. Hackley's Contribution to Muskegon

Attachment Two

Lesson One: Charles Hackley ¾ A Man with a Plan

Charles H. Hackley's Contribution to Muskegon

A few days after Christmas in 1889, Mr. Charles H. Hackley thought about the lack of a public park in the City of Muskegon and decided to give one. In February, he started obtaining options on lots in the square bounded by Third and Fourth Streets and Clay and Webster Avenues. His options did not include houses, which were to be retained by owners and moved to other locations. An exception was made in the case of the home owned by J.H. Landreth which was disposed when Mr. Hackley purchased it. The Hackley Public Library was under construction at that time at Third Street and Webster Avenue and the imposing three-story brick building of Central School stood opposite the planned new square. The school had been built in 1875.

Five property owners were on Clay Avenue and Fourth, on Webster, with one man having 132 feet frontage on Fourth at Webster. Mr. John Torren had 132 feet frontage at Third Street and Webster and by August of 1890, all property owners except Mr. Torren had given options. There was a large residence at Third and Webster that had been built by C.D. Nelson, a prominent lumberman with a mill at Port Sherman. Mr. Nelson was a member of the Muskegon School Board for several years. The Nelson School was also named for him. Mr. Hackley, who gave two notes for part of the price and asked the City to pay the balance, finally paid for the former Nelson property. The house was later sold to St. Jean's Church at Strong and Jefferson Street and was moved to the church property where it was used as rectory for the priests.

On Christmas Day, 1889, Mr. Hackley gave \$15,000 to Phil Kearny Post No. 7, G.A.R., to provide for a memorial monument in honor of Soldiers and Sailors who fought in the Civil War, and Mr. Hackley named three leading citizens as trustees to administer the fund. On Feb. 15, 1890, a joint meeting of trustees and a special committee from the city council was held and, on motion of an alderman, Block 71 was designated as the site for the monument. The first week of August, 1890, the trustees received several designs for a monument and later in the month a contract was awarded for the monument that now stands in the center of Hackley Park.

On August 19, 1890, Mr. Hackley filed a deed to Block 71 with the City Recorder and sent a letter to the Mayor and council requesting that the place be named Hackley Park and that it be forever provided for and maintained for public use.



By November 1, 1890, all houses in Block 71 had been moved off except the old Nelson house and the residence of R.H. McCracken, who was having a new one built near Webster and Fourth Street. The new home was not quite ready for occupancy, so moving the old one was delayed.

In August 1891, Mr. Hackley asked the city to vacate and close Webster between Third and Fourth Streets because he desired to install a fountain there to be an addition to the park. Residents protested it would cut off direct connection with the east and west parts of the city and Mr. Hackley withdrew his request.

The library was dedicated on Oct. 15, 1890, and the Central school was destroyed by fire in December of 1890. With money advanced by Mr. Hackley, the new Hackley School was built on the site. It is now a Community College. Foundations for the monument to be placed in the new park were completed on May 1, 1891, with ground graded and leveled. It was hoped that the monument could be dedicated on Memorial Day, 1891, but owing to many delays in work and material, the Soldiers Monument was not dedicated until Memorial Day in 1892. The first formal observance of Memorial Day in Muskegon had been in 1880. The four statues of Lincoln, Grant, Sherman and Farragut were dedicated in 1900. Mr. Hackley also provided for electric lights to be placed at the sides of the monument in the center of the park.

The following is a list of Hackley Gifts:

- Hackley Public Library (building and partial endowment)
- Hackley Hospital
- Hackley Hume Site
- Home of Charles H. Hackley, given to the Muskegon County Museum
- Muskegon Museum of Art, built and endowed by Julia Hackley
- Comerica Bank of Muskegon (formerly Hackley Bank), founded by Charles H. Hackley
- The Hume Home for the Aged, funded by Hume with money willed him by Charles Hackley
- The Hackley Park, its art work and the Julia Hackley Poor Fund, given to the City of Muskegon
- Hackley School, Hackley Vocational School, Hackley Playing Field, President McKinley Memorial Statuary, given to the Muskegon School System
- Benefactor of 1st Congregational Church, with shared responsibility for Hackley Hospital
- Benefactor of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, provided the church, various parts of the church

Excerpt from: [http://www.ci.muskegon.mi.us/Community/History/History of Muskegon.htm](http://www.ci.muskegon.mi.us/Community/History/History%20of%20Muskegon.htm)

