Winchester Public Library

An Illustrated History

by
Ellen Knight

Board of Library Trustees

Winchester, Massachusetts
2006

A Winchester Library Endowment Fund Project

Produced on the Occasion of the Winchester Public Library Building's 75th Anniversary

Photographs Courtesy of

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Winchester Public Library
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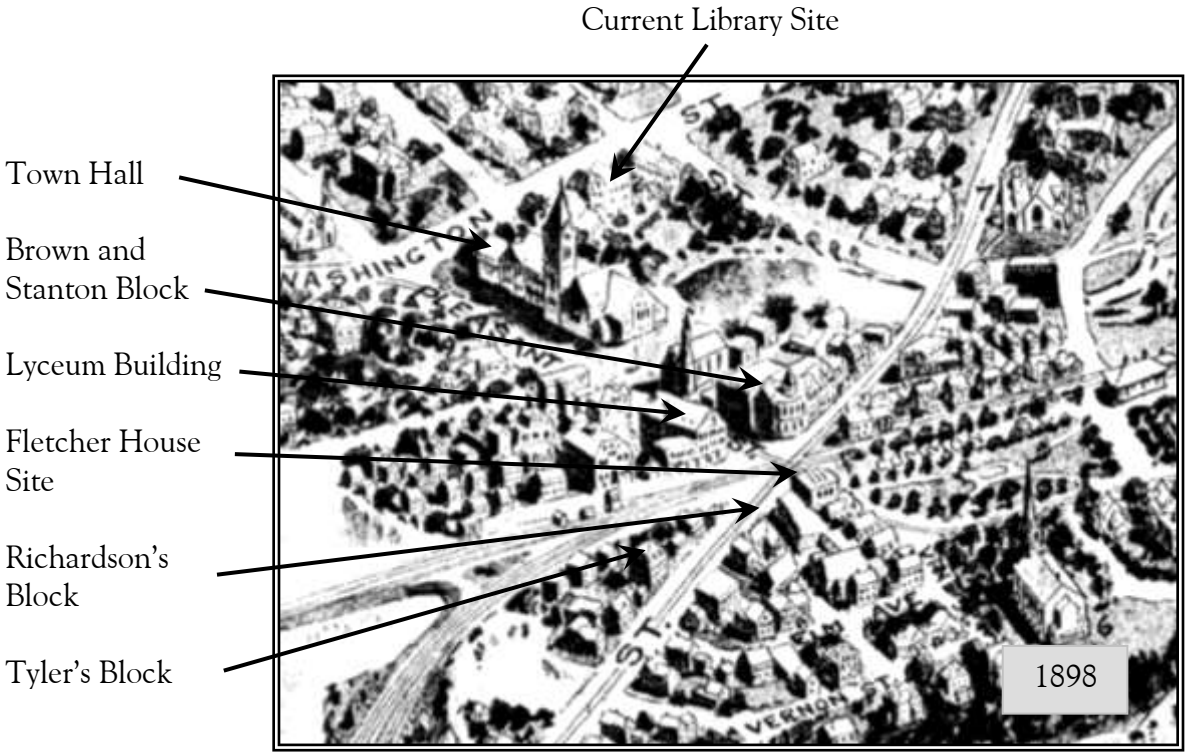
PREAMBLE

Believing that the security and permanency of our Republican institutions depend, under Providence, on the virtue and intelligence of the people, and that the establishment of a good LIBRARY in our midst will tend to increase the general morality, intelligence and happiness – we, the citizens of Winchester, have formed ourselves into a LIBRARY ASSOCIATION.

Constitution of the Winchester Library Association –1850

Locations of the Winchester Library Association and Winchester Public Library



South Woburn Library Association

The first lending library in the village of South Woburn, which formed the nucleus of the Town of Winchester when incorporated in 1850, was organized on March 20, 1848. Its originators were men who would take leading roles in the new town. The first librarian, who became Winchester's first Town Clerk, was Dr. David Youngman, apothecary, book-seller, and stationer. He kept the collection of books at his store. When his business changed hands, the library went with the store, and the storekeepers became librarians. The first home of the library was in Richardson's Block (pictured left).

"It was formed on the principle of a stock company, and the shares rated at three dollars each," Youngman recorded. "Any person purchasing one share became a member and could use the library as a reading-room or take out for home use one book at a time by paying an annual assessment of one dollar. Any person not a member could take from the library one book at a time by paying one dollar a year. Any other person could take books from the library by paying six cents a week on each book.

Youngman used funds from the sale of shares, about $100, to purchase the first books. "These books were covered with paper and arranged in a book-case, already provided, and the library went into successful operation in May, 1848…. The library was very well patronized from the outset, and the books very carefully used."

The Originators

Benjamin Thompson
First President of
S. Woburn Assoc.

John A. Bolles
First President of the
Winchester Library Association

Charles Kimball

Oliver R. Clark

Charles Pressey

(Among Others)

Winchester Library Association

With the incorporation of Winchester, the library association changed its name but continued to operate in a similar way with shares (as pictured below). Youngman continued to be librarian. When he moved his store, the library went with him. "In 1852," he related, "it was removed to the Lyceum Building, where it remained while the writer was its librarian, when it was removed back, for a time, to Richardson's building, and was kept, I think, by Miss Hannah Lane."

WINCHESTER LIBRARY ASSOCIATION.

Shares, 10

Know ye to Certify, that

Winchester Library Association,

After an apparently short time with Lane, who was a milliner, the collection was returned to the rear of the drug store, then owned by Josiah Hovey, hence the new librarian. The librarian's duties, as stated in the constitution, were simple: "The Librarian shall deliver and receive books on Wednesday and Saturday of each week, and shall keep the library in good order… and collect fees."

Winchester Agricultural Library Association

WINCHESTER

Agricultural Library.

REGULATIONS.

Founded about 1856, the Winchester Agricultural Library Association had about 150 volumes, devoted to agricultural subjects.

Kept in the same place and under the charge of the same librarian as the Winchester Library Association, it merged with the larger library prior to the entire collection's being given to the town.

Left: Bookplate with Agricultural Library regulations.

Winchester Town Library

On March 29, 1859, the collection of the Winchester Library Association, numbering about 1,100 volumes, was presented to the Town – on condition that $200 be appropriated at once to establish and maintain a public town library, the town annually appropriate not less than $100, the town keep the library in good order in charge of a competent librarian, and elect trustees. The Town duly appropriated $200, hired 19-year-old Reuben Fletcher for $20 as the first Librarian, and elected the minister of the Congregational Church, Rev. Reuben T. Robinson, former selectman Aaron D. Weld, and Thomas Emerson, son of another former selectman, as the first Board of Library Trustees.

Trustee Aaron Weld

Trustee Reuben Robinson

The rules changed. Users no longer purchased shares. According to the Bylaws:

Above: The original Town Library Bylaws open to the first page of signatures

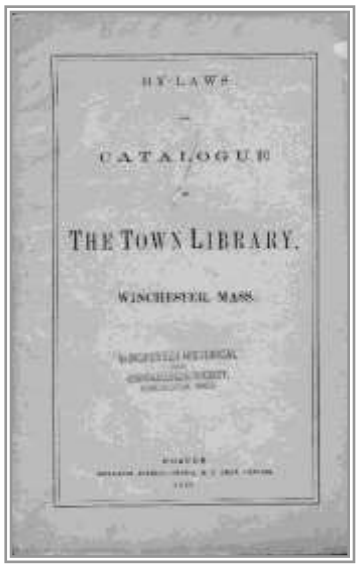
"1. Every citizen of Winchester, resident therein, and of the age of twenty-one years, capable of contracting in law, shall have the right to take books from the Library, on signing these By-laws and conforming thereto.

2. Each member of the family of said citizen, above the age of fourteen years, shall also have said right….if the father, brother, guardian, or other friend of said person, shall, by signing these By-laws, become responsible for said person.

3. Any resident of Winchester, not a legal citizen of said town, may have the use of the Library, by depositing with the Librarian the value of the book he takes…."

As a public institution, the library continued to be a great success.

"Our Library has become with us an established institution, a fixed fact, — so greatly valued, that we might now almost as easily dispense with or neglect our public schools, as pass lightly over that," the trustees reported in 1866.



That success depended upon public cooperation.

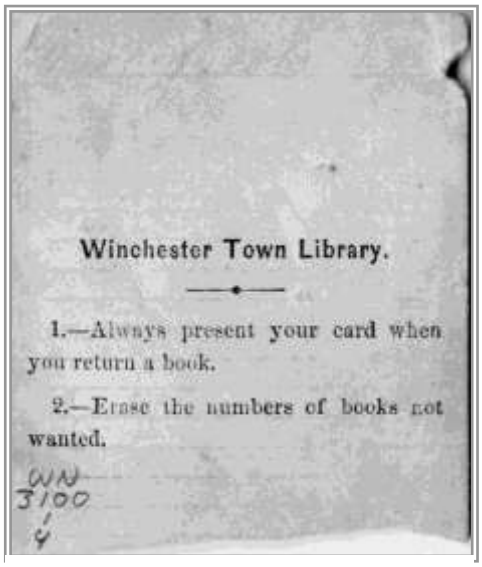
"Though every inhabitant of the Town is free to use our Library, he must conform to certain regulations…. These rules require him to provide himself with a catalogue (in which he will find the regulations), to enter upon his card the number of each volume sought for, to return within the proper time and *into the hands* of the Librarian all books issued to him, as well as to use the same carefully and neatly. Those who do thus use our books – and they are the majority – suffer from the selfish slovenliness of others, from whose hands books return bedaubed, tattered, loose in the binding, and defaced by silly comments penciled in the margin," the trustees reported in 1872.

"It is amazing to see and contemplate the large numbers [of books] drawn by some individuals, — column after column filled with their record—" (1866)

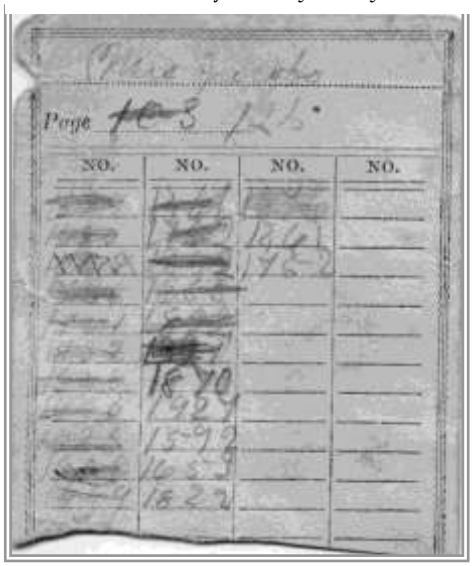
The library, still in the Lyceum Building, was open every Wednesday, 3 to 6 p.m., and Saturday from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. One book could be taken at a time, for two weeks – with a six-cent fine for each week overdue. For many years, wherever housed, the library did not have open shelves.

The library lost its first librarian when Reuben Fletcher, who enlisted in October of 1861, turned the job over to his brother William, (later librarian at Amherst College). William Fletcher, 16, and Albion Cate, 15, both acted as librarian in 1861. In 1862, Harrison Parker II, 19, served as librarian before he also enlisted. Five other young men subsequently served as librarian while the town library continued to share the Selectmen's room in the Lyceum Building.

The young ages of these first librarians become understandable when considering that the library was originally open only six hours a week. It was not yet a career. Beginning in 1867, the list of early librarians (see p. 8) suddenly becomes dominated by the names of young women, evidently due to the library's moving into new quarters.



Front and back of an early library card



"For years, its location in the selectmen's room has been found attended with many serious inconveniences and annoyances," the Trustees wrote in 1867. "The room is opened, not only for its legitimate uses, but … individuals, too, have come to appropriate the room, unceremoniously, to their own private uses; and that, too, on library days, thus preventing access to it. In addition, the entrance is often impeded by numerous men and boys, who make it their sauntering rendezvous, particularly at evening, thus rendering ingress and egress embarrassing and annoying, especially for ladies."

Fletcher House, third home of the library, at the corner of Main and Church Streets

In 1868, the library's 1,764 volumes moved across the street to the Fletcher house, home of three of the early librarians. "It is of convenient access, has ceased to be the rendezvous of noisy loiterers, perfect quiet and decorum have been secured, and it can now be visited with vastly more comfort and satisfaction, especially by the ladies. What is of much importance, less books have been lost."

But the new quarters were not perfect. "Objection has been made, that the Library-room is not sufficiently lighted and that seats are not provided for individuals, while waiting. In reply, we would say, the Library-room is not a reading room, as we wish it might be." (1870)

The library, numbering almost 3,000 volumes, moved again in 1873 to the second story of Tyler's Block on Main Street. By the end of the decade, the library again needed more room, and again it was moved.

Right: Main Street at the end of the 19th century. Tyler's Block is visible on the right side of the street in the background of this picture. When the library was there, the building on the near right, the Brown & Stanton Building, had not yet been built.

In 1880, the trustees finally got a reading room when the library moved to the new Brown and Stanton Building above Stanton's grocery store (at the right end of the building). "The transfer to the new quarters was made at the request of many residents of Winchester, who signed a petition to that effect." (1881)

Occasional problems persisted. "The trustees call attention to the necessity of *quiet* in the waiting-room. A placard to this effect has long hung in a conspicuous place, but does not always serve to hush loud talking. It is embarrassing to the librarian to remind persons of the rule, and it should not be necessary." (1881)

In May 1882, the trustees added Monday afternoon and evening to the schedule. Assistant Librarian Cora Quimby recalled, "I was placed in charge of Monday evening. My last duty at night was to take a chair from the library, go out to the head of the stairs, climb up, and put out a kerosene lamp, placed there by the Trustees to light the stairs from the street, return the chair to the library, lock the door, and go down the stairs in the dark. One night I met a drunken man coming up the stairs. Well, I was braver then than now!"

In 1885, the trustees granted the use of a room to the Winchester Historical & Genealogical Society. Beginning in December 1886, the library was open every evening Monday through Friday. Students used the library more. "The librarians have spent no inconsiderable part of their time in the Library, in advising upon suitable books to be read in connection with school studies." (1887)

The collection grew by about 2,000 volumes before it moved again. "Next to Fiction, Magazines had the largest circulation; and next – but by long intervals – came other classes in the following order: Travels, Biography, History, Literature, Science, Theology." (Trustees, 1883) "It is a very common belief that fiction constitutes an inferior order of literatures and that readers of fiction are wasting, or at least misappropriating, the whole time which they give to such reading. This belief arises from a mistaken idea as to one of the main objects of reading. Books form one of our chief sources of information…. But we go to them also for a different purpose. Men and women need something more than facts to shape their ideas of right and wrong, to stimulate their affections for what is good and true, and to stir the hidden forces of their natures to what is highest and best within the possibilities of their lives." (1886)

The First Librarians

In 1875, the Trustees appointed Katherine Pond (1850-1940) as librarian, one of their most fortunate appointments since she stayed, faithfully discharging the duties of librarian, for 13 years. Prior to Pond's appointment, whether male or female, the first librarians were generally in their teens and lasted for a year or less. Two or three young people sometimes served in the library during a year. In 1872, the trustees reported, "As the books are more used, the librarian's work increases, and it has now become necessary to increase her pay and to employ an assistant." By the end of her tenure, Pond had two assistants. When recognized in the trustees' reports, librarians were generally commended for being neat, orderly, and faithful.

Edward A. Robinson, the 14-year-old son of former trustee Rev Robinson, was the first assistant librarian, helping Mary Nichols. In 1875, when Alice Fletcher (age 21, pictured left) was librarian, she had the assistance of her sister Kitty (14). Together they earned $113. By the end of Pond's tenure, she had two assistants. When recognized in the trustees' reports, librarians were generally commended for being neat, orderly, and faithful.

While some of the other early librarians are essentially unknowns in Winchester history, others, including Harrison Parker II and Arthur Whitney, who later became a trustee (and married former librarian Alice Fletcher) became notable townspeople and community leaders. David N. Skillings became a library benefactor, donating $500 to the library.

Early Librarians & Assistants of the Town Library

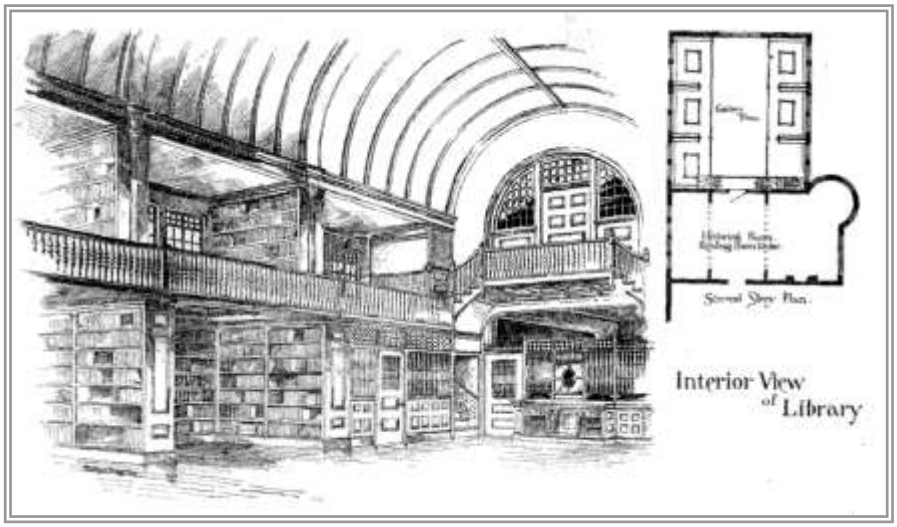
At the Lyceum Building	At the Fletcher House	At Tyler's Block
Reuben H. Fletcher, 1860	Mary Nichols, 1867-1868	Lucinda E. Draper, 1873
William I. Fletcher, 1861	Ellen Swan, 1867	Clara B. Cilley, 1873-1874
Albion Cate, 1861	Etta Nichols, 1868-1872	Elmira Davis, 1873-1874
Harrison Parker, II, 1862	E. W. Fifield (Miss), 1868	Alice Fletcher, 1875
David N. Skillings, Jr. , 1862-63	Edward Robinson, 1871	Kitty Fletcher, 1875
Arthur E. Whitney, 1863-64	E. C. Swan, 1872 (Miss)	Edith M. Meade, 1875
Henry F. Lynde, 1864-1865	William R. Stone, 1872	
George T. Fletcher, 1865-1866		At Brown & Stanton Block
Walter F. Brackett, 1866-1867		Katherine Pond, 1875-1888

Town Hall Library

After years during which the library and other Town departments rented office space in rooms around town, in 1888 the new Town Hall & Library, designed by Rand & Taylor opened. At one end was the auditorium. At the other (pictured in the left foreground) was the library wing.

As seen in the architect's drawing, the Book Room was two stories high, though at first the upper alcoves were not built. On the first floor, for about 20 years, the Book Room was separated from the Reading Room by a high grill fence and door. The room above the reading room was first by the historical society.

Although the book stacks remained closed until 1904, reference books were placed in a bookcase specially built for that purpose in the Reading Room and could be consulted without calling upon the librarian.



The library was gradually ornamented through gifts, including a portrait and marble bust of the town's eponym, Col. William P. Winchester (gifts from the Colonel's family to the town), plus busts of Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison modeled by resident artist Edward A. Brackett (presented by Mrs. Brackett in 1908), also a portrait of Abraham B. Coffin painted by A. H. Bicknell (a gift of Mrs. Coffin). In 1894, the family of trustee Joseph Howe Tyler donated three stained glass windows designed by Tiffany and Company, which were installed in the Reading Room. Other paintings were donated or purchased.

Left: Two views from the Reading Room into the Book Room, with an unidentified figure. The second view was photographed after the staircase was built to link the lower and upper reading rooms. The Book Room is now the Winchester Room in Town Hall.

Right off, the library had problems with space. The Reading Room was next to the delivery area where patrons requested and returned books and waited. The card catalogue was in one corner. The room tended to be noisy. It was too small. In 1898, that problem was relieved by creating a second Reading Room out of the Historical Society's room upstairs.

The original plans did not accommodate children. After the stacks were opened, children had an alcove there, but it was not enough. "What to do with the children has become the problem of the year. The children seem to come in groups, crowd the juvenile alcove to select their books, then remain in the reading room supposedly to read, more often to play. They are constantly a great annoyance to the adult readers and a hindrance to the work of the library staff," librarian Cora Quimby reported in 1906.

The first Children's Room was opened in 1907. Jessie MacDonald was appointed Children's Librarian. "It was a tradition that said children should stamp up and down the stairs to the Children's Room and be spoken to in no uncertain terms by Miss Quimby, quite to the children's delight," Trustee Francis Smith recalled.

The Winchester Historical & Genealogical Society used its room for about a decade. When it became a second reading room, it was used for Library Art Club exhibitions. When it was the Children's Room, Trustee Francis Smith recalled that it "had a beautiful outlook over the old joy Estate and contained various historical treasures including silverware and old maps and other relics which made it an unusually attractive room."

The library was technologically up to date, having a typewriter when it opened. In 1908, a telephone was installed. In 1909, it began using a "vacuum cleaning process."

Library practices progressed. Beginning in 1893, the library had a card catalog. The first catalogue of books for young people appeared in 1896. Book reserve was introduced in 1904, and the Dewey Decimal System in 1912. The Newark charging system, by which the patron's library card and the book card were both date stamped, was installed in 1911.

Above: The Reading Room, showing the Tyler Windows at the rear. This room is now the Town Clerk's Office.

The rules relaxed over time. Readers were allowed access to the shelves to select books in 1904. In 1902, two books were allowed out on one card, other than new books or fiction, and after several years the limit was lifted. In 1909, the librarian wrote, "Never was the policy of the library as liberal as at present. Any reasonable number of books not new or in great demand are allowed persons who will be responsible for them." The fine for overdue books was one cent per day.

Aside from 1895 when an experiment with opening on Sundays was tried and abandoned, the library was open on weekdays from 2 to 8:30 p.m., with reduced summer hours. Not until 1930 did the library open at 10 a.m.

During this era, the library was in the care of Cora Quimby. Just three months after the new library opened, the trustees reluctantly accepted Pond's resignation. Quimby, who had been an assistant librarian, succeeded her and surpassed her length of service, staying with the library until 1939. She had a succession of assistants. "From the first one of my chief difficulties with my assistants was that they would get married. In fact, at times it seemed as if I was running a regular matrimonial bureau."

In 1924, in writing a historical synopsis of the library in Town Hall, Quimby concluded, "A summary of the record could well be **More space; More Money**." During its 43 years in Town Hall, the collection constantly grew – and outgrew its space. Storage room was found in the basement. Bookcases were added to the reading room. Bookcases in the stacks were rearranged. In 1914, the trustees recommended that a study committee be formed to look into a new site. Ten years later, the trustees again recommended a new building. "The books are crowded on the shelves—the older books are stored in the cellar in dark, damp, dusty places–, the reading room is small, noisy, and uninviting, there is no study or reference room where proper quiet can be obtained or sufficient space for administration work of the librarian and assistants."

Year	Volumes	Circulation	Appropriation
1860	1,100	3,600	$200
1880	4,801	16,629	$700
1900	13,946	43,925	$1,500
1910	22,343	45,035	$2,200
1920	24,919	64,063	$4,800
1930	38,752	78,035	$9,000

As for "More Money," several townspeople helped by donating or bequeathing books or money. The budget was also supplemented by money raised from dog licenses, so it concerned the Trustees that dogs be duly licensed, as evidenced in their 1889 report:

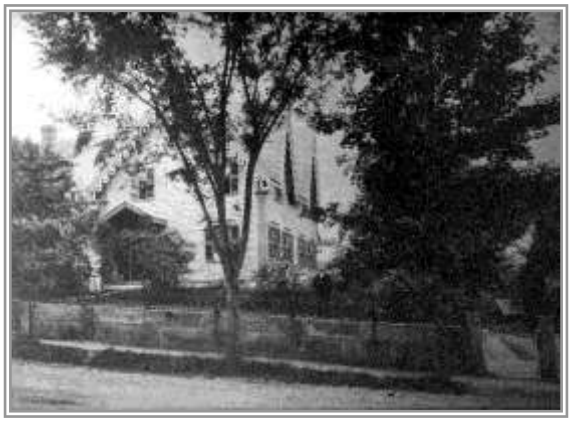
"It will be seen … that the evident multiplication of dogs in our midst has not led to a corresponding increase in amount of income received from dog licenses, the sum total being slightly less than [the] amount received last year. As the legal right of our canine friends to exist happily among us depends upon the prompt payment of their license fees, it behooves both friends of the dogs and of the library to see that no pet escapes paying for the privilege of living in such a dog-loving community, and for such a noble purpose."

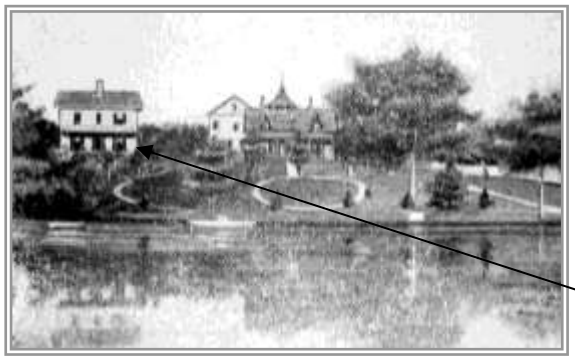
•

Above: Coit Family dogs, licensed supporters of the public library.

New Library Site

When the trustees first proposed finding a new library site, three homes stood next to Town Hall on Washington Street. The immediate abutter was the Cutting House. In 1917, the Town bought the Cutting estate to protect Town Hall against encroachment of future buildings. The Town used the house for a variety of purposes up through the 1960s, including a home for the American Legion and the Red Cross.





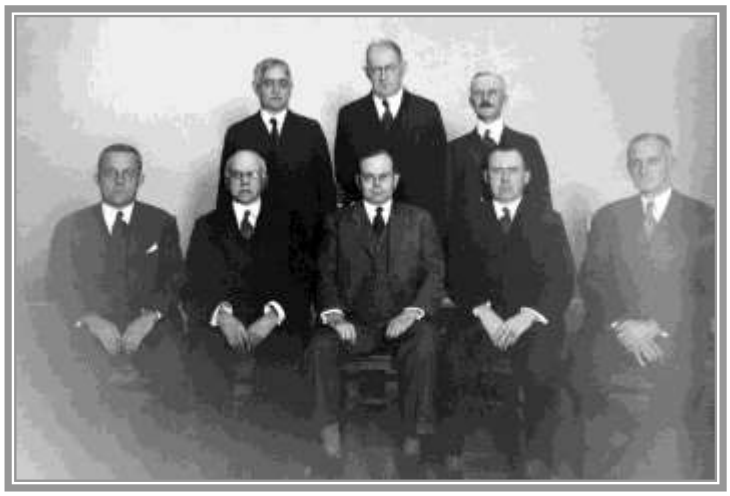
Next to the Cutting House were the Joy house and a house on the parkway corner which was demolished about 1914 and whose land came to be owned by the Christian Science Church. (The cottage pictured left center was gone after 1868.)

Joy House

The Joy estate was deemed the best site for the new library. "Lewis Parkhurst offered to make a gift of enough of his land adequately to sustain the library, but Chairman Edgar Rich and others realized that the ideal site was the present one. " (Francis Smith) In 1928, the Town bought the Joy estate and took the church lot by eminent domain. Town Meeting appointed a Library Plan Committee in 1929.

Winchester Public Library

In 1929, the Library Plan Committee engaged the firm of Kilham, Hopkins & Greeley, with former trustee Robert Coit as associated architect, to prepare preliminary plans for a new library. Based on their designs for a three-story stone building, the committee suggested an appropriation of $175,000. Town Meeting approved it. "The way it was settled was quite dramatic," Smith recalled. It was the last order of business on the last day of the Town Meeting in April 1930. "We waited and waited and then shortly before midnight Ralph T. Hale was recognized; he got up and made a 1 ¾ minute – or less than two minute– talk and the assembly voted practically unanimously for it, and the new library was born."



Left Rear: Architects Coit, and Kilham, Builder Alexander
Front: Building Committee Carl F. Woods, Edgar J. Rich, Ralph T. Hale, M. Walker Jones, James Nowell

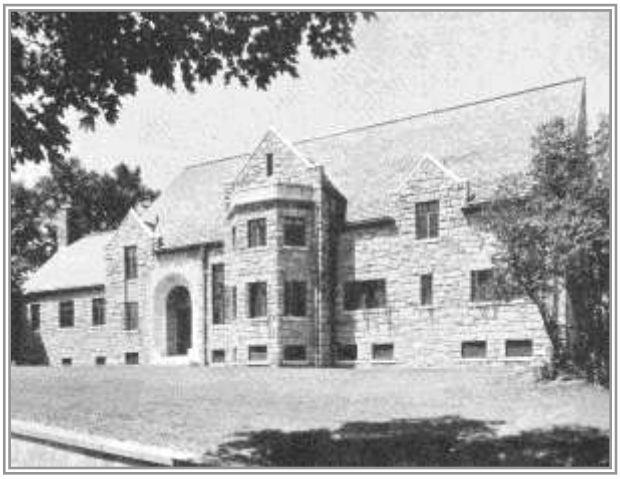
Immediately afterward, a second vote transformed the planning committee into a Library Building Committee. Town Meeting dissolved at 12:05 a.m.

The Building Committee awarded the construction contract to a Winchester man, Frederic C. Alexander, who employed, as far as possible, Winchester workers, including James Wilkinson, electrical contractor, and George Soar, heating contractor.

Anticipating more work associated with a new building, a Special Town Meeting in 1931 increased the number of trustees from three to six. This board was also remarkable for the presence of the first female trustee, Jennie C. Gates.

Right: The 1931 Board of Trustees
Rear: Francis Smith, Ralph T. Hale, M. Walker Jones
Front: Edgar Rich, George H. Eustis, Jennie C. Gates

Ground was broken in October 1930, just as the celebration for the Massachusetts Bay Tercentenary was beginning. Construction proceeded through 1931 and was finished under budget. The new building was dedicated on December 5, when Ralph Hale, Chairman of the Building Committee, presented it to George Eustis, Chairman of the Trustees. The building opened for regular use on December 7.



To provide variety from the brick buildings in the downtown area, the building exterior was constructed of West Townsend granite. The roof was made of graduated slate in varying masses of green and purple (weighing 65 tons). An arch of blue and gold mosaic formed the setting for the main entrance.

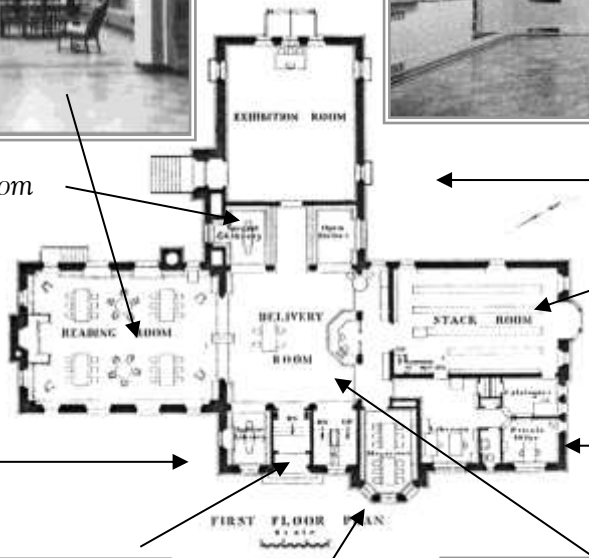
Townspeople helped in the construction and design of furnishings. The granite had a backing of the Winchester Brick Company's white sand-lime brick. The interior floors were made of concrete laid on reinforced concrete planks, supplied and invented by the chairman of the School Committee, Edward A. Tucker. Other local men laid the front slate and concrete walkway, designed furniture, and provided built-in shelving.

Left: Behind the library, a remnant of the Joy estate survived for many years in the Joy pergola (left foreground). Edgar Rich thought it might make an outdoor reading room. Minnie Joy told Rich, "The pergola cost my brother more than one thousand dollars, and the vines planted many years ago (largely grapes) were destroyed by boys of the Wadleigh School."

Reading Room

Exhibition Room / Art Gallery

American History Room



3-story Stack Room

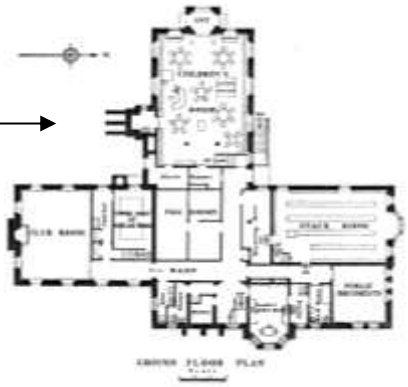
Special Collections

Offices

Juniors' Reading Room

Main Entrance

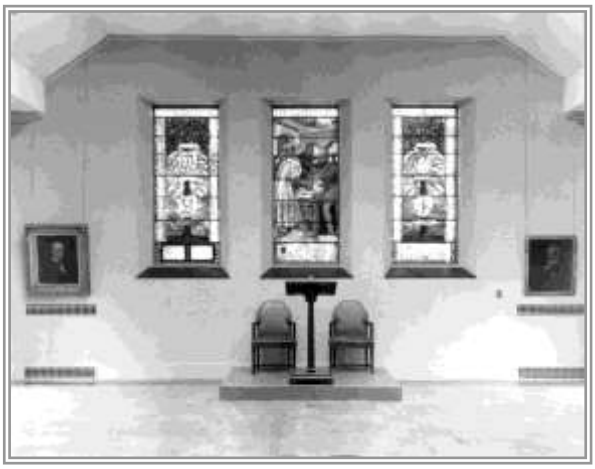
Lobby/ Delivery Room



Children's Library with its own entrance

The new library was accounted a remarkable building. It was featured in *Architecture* and *The Architectural Forum.* The built-in lighting was written up in *Edison Service News* and *Lighting*. "The library building has fulfilled the fondest expectations of its friends," the Trustees proudly reported in 1932.

"Perhaps no feature of the building has excited more favorable comment than the Art Gallery," the Trustees also wrote. Chairman Edgar Rich urged that the library should be made the Cultural Center of Winchester, and the trustees adopted his vision. There was also a meeting room in the basement, used by town organizations. On the top floor, a room "to preserve the relics and records of earlier Winchester days" was created in the northeast corner above the offices. This prompted the reformation in 1932 of the Winchester Historical Society, which used the Historical Room and the art gallery for lectures and historical expositions. The exterior site also became a cultural center. In 1939, the En Ka Society's Annual Street Fair opened for the first time on its grounds.



Taking pride of place in the Art Gallery were the three Tyler windows, moved from Town Hall and installed into the back wall. The windows depict, at center, John Guttenberg, inventor of movable type, flanked by representations of the tree of knowledge and wisdom. Various printers' marks and quotations about printing and books also decorate the windows.

The room was used for art exhibits, lectures, and meetings of a cultural nature.

When the library opened, it proudly displayed its own collection of works by Winchester artists. These were acquired for the library with the help of a committee formed of local artists Hermann Dudley Murphy, Gerrit A. Beneker, Otis Philbrick, and W. H. W. Bicknell.

Under Murphy's leadership, the library trustees and art committee organized the Winchester Art Association in May 1932. The association, formed by fifty people "willing to pay $2 per year to bring culture in the form of art to Winchester," as Beneker put it, took over the task of organizing exhibits and also gave art classes. Early exhibits included works loaned by the Vose Galleries and Fogg Art Museum of Harvard College.

In 1942 the Art Gallery also became a movie theater after 19 organizations chipped in to buy a moving picture projector and air-conditioning was installed. Winchester's library became the first public library in the state to institute weekly programs of Educational Moving Pictures and offer families a Friday night out together to see such movies as *The Weather*, *Native Arts of Old Mexico*, and *Men of Medicine.*

To make room for changing exhibits in the gallery, the library's own collection was hung on various walls throughout the library. In 1934, two art works became part of the walls, when murals were painted by Lexington artist Aiden Lassell Ripley and former resident Ettoré Caser. Through Murphy's efforts, both were commissioned by the Works Progress Administration and funded through donations. Ripley's imagined scene of *The Beginning of Winchester*, the English colonists buying the land from the Squaw Sachem of the Massachusett tribe, overlooks the lobby. Caser's *Bible Reading in a Puritan Home* overlooks the reading room. (See color photos.)

To match the new building, library service and librarian training improved. "When the library moved into the new building, the trustees adopted a policy of hiring assistants who had the equivalent of a college or junior college education." (1940) When Quimby retired, the trustees hired its first non-resident library director, Corinne Mead. "One of the reasons I was invited to take the position," Mead said, "was my philosophy of library service to the entire community." Another was her experience. Having been a librarian in Watertown and active in various library associations, Mead had acquired a broad understanding of library problems. Although Quimby was thoroughly versed in the Winchester library, took a special library course at Simmons College, and attended library conventions, when Mead arrived, the practice of hiring a trained, professional librarian to head the staff was firmly established.

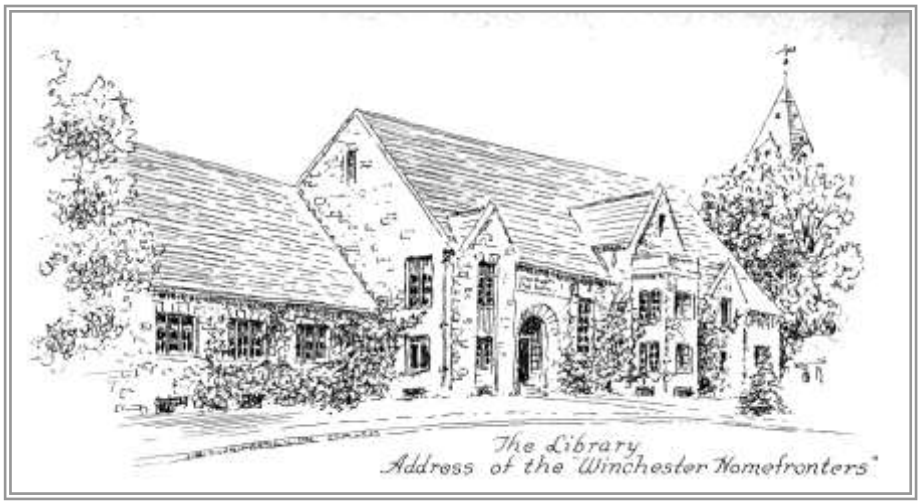
One of Mead's first accomplishments , after taking over in 1940, was the reclassification of library positions. When the new library opened, assistants were classified as clerks, with a salary limitation of $20 a week, by the Committee on Equalization of Salaries. "To classify as clerks young women who had spent four years in college discouraged the staff and makes it extremely difficult to secure properly qualified assistants when vacancies occur," Mead commented. She prepared a handbook with definitions of positions and minimum qualifications and helped develop a pay plan establishing qualifications for each position.

One of the goals the trustees had in appointing Mead was "to increase its scope and usefulness in the coming years." The library collection expanded, as did its services, including Winchester Hospital Library Book Service and the Educational Moving Pictures program, which Mead instituted.

Just one year into Mead's tenure as librarian, the library returned to serving the home front war effort. As with World War I, the library did its bit collecting books for the soldiers and sailors and displaying information related to the war. This time, the building was prepared for total blackout and designated as one of 1,200 in the country as a War Information Center, thus receiving materials from various governmental agencies. Government films were included in the moving picture programs, and meetings were coordinated with the Red Cross and Civilian Defense Committee. "One of that year's highlights," Mead recalled, "was a meat-cutting demonstration in the Art Gallery arranged by the Civil Defense Food Committee." With a goal of creating "a happy haven of escape for children during the war years," music was introduced into the children's library through a victrola and radio.

Recorded music came into the adult library after a bequest led to the creation of the Jere A. Downs Memorial Room on the second floor in 1950. The new room allowed the library to build up its collection of art and music books.

It was also the scene of programs of recorded music. A bequest by Elizabeth Downs facilitated the acquisition of a lending collection of recordings.



Left: In 1951 the library, still the meeting site for community groups, became the head-quarters for the Winchester Home-fronters, who sent Christmas greetings, including a card designed by local artist Ernest Dudley Chase, to local service men and women.

In 1951, the basement meeting room became the new home for the Edgar J. Rich Lincoln-Lee Collection of over 12,000 books, pamphlets, and memorabilia on the Civil War and Reconstruction periods. Rich, a trustee for 37 years, also bequeathed a Trust Fund for expanding the library's collection on the Civil War and American history and a student essay contest, plus the furniture for the room (some still surviving). At the dedication, an address was given by Civil-War authority Arthur M. Schlesinger of Harvard University. For a time, a Lincoln Group used the room and collection for Civil-War study.

Also in the 1950s, a Family Room with books on family life and education was created in one of the second-floor balconies. Families in post-war Winchester were multiplying. During the library building's first 24 years, Winchester's population grew by about 5,000, and the number of registered borrowers doubled. The subject of expanding the building came up as early as 1942. It came up more seriously during the 1950s.

Year	Volumes	Circulation
1930	38,752	78,035
1940	36,571	127,432
1950	52,115	139,757
1960	71,159	225,198

In 1957, an article went on the warrant recommending a building addition. Town Meeting voted it down. A year later, Town Meeting approved an appropriation for less expensive renovations. These were finished in time for the Winchester Public Library Centennial Celebration on May 4, 1959, featuring an address "Books and Characters" by Professor David E. Owen of Harvard University, plus art and historical exhibits.

Due to the changes of the 1950s the building lost some of its character as a cultural center. The historical collection was moved out to create the Downs Room. At the end of 1957, the Art Gallery was given shelving and furniture for a new reading room.

Left: The former Art Gallery as a Reading Room (The wall at right was taken out in 1965.)

Changes in 1958 included enlarging the Children's Library through eliminating closets and an office (above left), adding other shelving, enlarging the circulation desk (above right), and making various repairs.

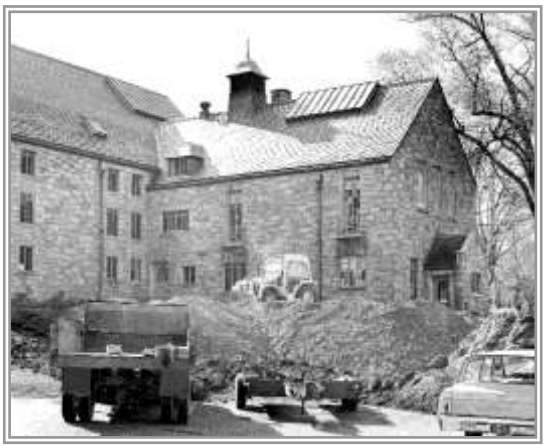
By this time, the library had changed its head librarian twice. Mead retired at the end of 1954. After 11 years as assistant librarian, Winchester resident Doris Maxwell Philbrook took over the head position from 1955 to 1957. She was succeeded by Lois G. Smith (1957-1963), who came from a varied background in school, college, and public libraries. Smith (pictured left) directed the library during the renovations, which proved to be only a stopgap measure since space was still considered inadequate, especially in the Children's Library.

A more welcome solution came finally during the tenure of the first male head librarian, Robert W. Wagenknecht. Former head of the Stoneham Public Library, Wagenknecht served as Winchester's librarian just long enough (1963-1967) to work with the trustees to develop a program for the library and see it fitted into a new addition.

Left: The staff room in the original building, just prior to the addition being built.

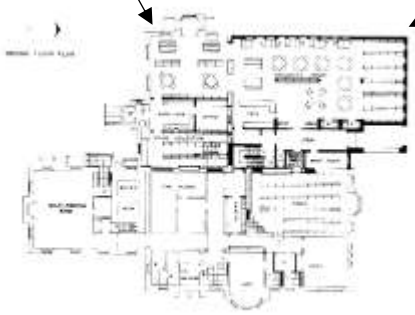
Library Addition

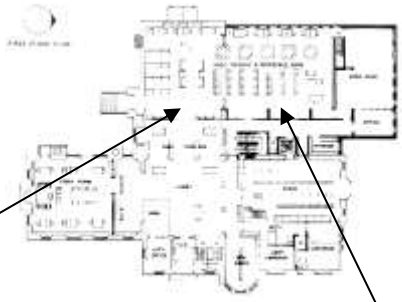
A new proposal to enlarge and renovate the library came forward in 1964. Head Librarian Wagenknecht and the trustees developed a program, which was submitted to a Library Addition Building Committee, chaired by H. Gardner Bradlee, and to the Permanent Building Committee. They engaged Kilham, Hopkins, Greeley & Brodie to develop the design. The question went forward to Town Meeting – twice. Through an error, the article was placed on the warrants for both the regular Town Meeting and a Special Town Meeting. After it lost once, proponents returned with enough rhetoric to see it pass the second time.



When the building was built in 1931, it was sited close to the Cutting House, on the supposition that the house would some day be removed if an extension of the book stacks were required. While the addition was built without removing the old house, the successive boards of trustees considered that its removal would improve the view of the library. Town Meeting in 1967 authorized its removal; in 1969, the old house was demolished.

The addition was designed to increase the library's book capacity to a future maximum of 100,000 volumes. It more than doubled the size of the Junior Library.





It expanded the reading and reference room by opening the former art gallery into the main floor of the addition and provided more stack space on the second floor. The 1931 reading room was designated the Winchester Room and held local histories, town reports, and Americana. The room (at right) was later named for Trustee Francis Smith and later yet became the audio-visual room. The former Rich Room was converted back into a meeting room, while a new, smaller Rich Room was created next to the Downs Room in the former Trustees Room.

(Note: Photographs on this page show the 1965 structure with 1990s furnishings.)

With an enlarged building, the library's collections and services grew. No longer limited to books and periodicals, the library held records, musical scores, cassettes, films, filmstrips, and rolls of microfilm. Materials were loaned not only to visiting patrons but also hospital patients and shut-ins and users of inter-library loan.

In 1967, Leila-Jane Roberts, a long-time Winchester resident, took over as head librarian, in 1973 assuming the new title of library director. Like Philbrook, Roberts was promoted from within. After six years as a high-school teacher, she joined the library staff and was soon put in charge of circulation. In 1963 when Wagenknecht arrived, she became assistant librarian. During her time, the size of the Board of Trustees was reduced to five when Winchester adopted the Home Rule Charter in 1975.

Year	Holdings	Circulation
1960	71,159	225,198
1970	90.307	275,510
1981	101,297	262,971
(1980 figures not printed in the Annual Report)		

Meanwhile the collection grew, and for many years the library rearranged the collections and weeded its holdings. Nevertheless, the capacity of the enlarged library was met by the time Roberts resigned in February 1981.

The greatest challenge for the new director, Matthew Sperber, former director of the Bridgewater Public Library, was not space but the budget. During the 1970s, the Town adopted a policy of no new programs or expansions. This challenge became even greater with the passage of Proposition 2 ½ in 1980. The library had to reduce its hours, some staff, and its book budget.

One method of supplementing the straitened book budget was joining, as a founding member, the Minuteman Library Network in 1983, which increased available materials from about 110,000 volumes to about 1.5 million. A book detection system was installed in 1985 to help protect the collection.

A significant step to help supplement the budget was taken in 1981 with the organization of the Friends of the Library. Fund-raising was not new. The first known fund-raiser was an Olde Folks Concert held in the vestry of the Congregation Church in 1877 which raised $17.65 to supplement the library's annual appropriation of $500. But never before had anyone embarked on fund-raising and volunteer help on the scale undertaken by the Friends, especially when it came time for the next library renovation.

When Sperber resigned in 1990, the trustees noted his three major accomplishments having been helping to develop the Friends, guiding the extensive automation of services, and enhancing the library's function as a cultural center with art exhibits, concerts, and other events.

Renovation

Before Sperber left, the trustees turned their attention again to solving space problems when they commissioned a feasibility study in 1987, but the proposed renovation failed at Town Meeting. Guiding the library through the actual realization of a solution fell to the new director, Lynda Wills, who came to Winchester in 1990 after having been director of the Nevins Memorial Library in Methuen.

The trustees resumed working toward a renovation in 1992. In 1993, a Special Town Meeting approved an appropriation of $3,535,000 for remodeling, reconstruction, and repairs. The trustees, who acted as their own building committee, engaged the architectural firm of Thompson, French, and Matsumoto for the design. In 1994, bids coming in too high, the project was downsized, but bids still came in too high. After Town Meeting added $780,000 to the budget, the general contract was awarded in 1995 to Pascucci Brothers Inc.

The Trustees organized the Build for the Future campaign under the umbrella of the Friends of the Library, which raised $580,000 to complement the renovation with furnishings, cleaning and repair of the Tiffany windows and Caser mural, and landscaping.

Right Front: Trustees Ernest Phillips, Ellen Browning;
Rear: Anne Nevins, Lane McGovern, Deborah Pavelle

During the summer of 1994, after a vigorous weeding of the collection, the library moved into cramped quarters in the vacant Mystic School building to operate through the renovation.

Left: the temporary reference room at the Mystic School.

The old building was then gutted and renovated. Over two years later, the library moved back into its own space – renewed, reorganized, upgraded, wired for new technologies, handicapped accessible and beautified.

On Nov. 24, 1996, the renovated library was re-dedicated and opened to the public to view a transformed library building. (See color photos.)

Above: Chairman Phillips addresses the public at the re-dedication of the library.

In the renovated building, walls were removed and floors were leveled, resulting in a 20 percent gain in usable space and in flexibility for arranging the stacks. The walls creating the Rich Room and Downs Room, which had become the Trustees' Room (left), on the top floor were taken out.

Staff functions were moved off the main floor to free up space for patron services. The chronic problem of seating space for after-school crowds was solved by relocating the Meeting Room to the main floor in the original Reading Room and doubling its function as an afternoon homework center. The former Young Adult area (right) became an office.

The 1965 addition was gutted and given a new façade more harmonious with the original structure. Inside, cherry millwork, marble counter tops, and paint finishes were chosen to complement the original décor. In the lobby, a terrazzo floor was laid with a decorative compass rose design recalling the original 1931 design. A new skylight was installed overhead. Color was introduced to the walls. In the Meeting Room, rich burgundy surrounds the Caser mural. A deep green highlights the Tiffany windows and establishes a contemplative mood. A wide central staircase under a skylight united the 1931 and 1965 buildings. In the Children's Library, a glass-enclosed extension opens onto a view of Mill Pond.

Jon French, principal architect of the renovation

Privately funded landscaping, supervised by Julie Khuen, project designer, and Todd Richardson, landscape architect (pictured left), was finished in 1998. In 2001, library landscaping was extended as stairs and pathways were joined with those created for the new landscaping around Mill Pond and Sandy's Island.

Right: The Friends Executive Board in 1996: Front: Christine Goodyear, Betsy Coonley, Louise West
Rear: Marcia Wood, Sam Thayer, MaryLu Cowgill, Johannes Spanjaard, Denise Pappas, Jack Carucci

In the renovated building, library services have not just continued but have even gone global with a Web site, chosen in its first year by the Massachusetts Library Association PR Committee as the state's #1 library Website .

Year	Holdings	Circulation
1990	128,231	235,085
2000	116,241	348,118
2005	121,265	509,815

In 1868, the trustees reported, "Our Library, next to our public schools, takes rank in importance among our liberal institutions for the improvement of the people." In 2006, it is no different. The library continues improving the quality of life of the citizens of Winchester, as affirmed by the trustees of 1999, through:

- Opportunities for relaxation, recreation, and restorative reflection
- Access to general information that supports citizens personally and professionally
- Lifelong learning opportunities

by providing current topics and titles, general information on a broad array of topics, and by fostering a love of reading and an awareness of the resources available in the public library.

In 2004, the library celebrated its 2 millionth visitor since the renovation was completed, confirming that it is fulfilling its mission and testifying, as the trustees wrote in 1866, that it has become a fixed feature in the community.

Trustees

Rev. Reuben T. Robinson	1859-1867
Aaron D. Weld	1859-1860
Thomas Emerson	1859-1862
James Russell	1861-1863
Dr. Alonzo Chapin	1863-1874
Rev. Henry Hinckley	1864-1866
Wilson Palmer	1867-1869
Dr. Frederick Winsor	1868-1885
Samuel J. Bronson	1868
Daniel D. Patten	1869-1873
Joseph H. Tyler	1874-1881
Edwin A. Wadleigh	1875-1883
Robert B. Metcalf	1881, 1884-86
Alfred C. Vinton	1882-1887
Arthur E. Whitney	1886-1903
Lewis Parkhurst	1887-1888
Frederick H. Page	1888-1890
Horace D. Bradbury	1889-1898
Edwin N. Lovering	1891-1902
James F. Dorsey	1898-1901
George W. Davenport	1902-1904
George H. Eustis	1903-1940
Theodore C. Hurd	1904-1911
Robert Coit	1904-1922
Edgar J. Rich	1911-1948
Francis E. Smith	1923-1952
Ralph T. Hale	1931-1951
Jennie C. Gates	1931-1947
M. Walker Jones	1931-1952
Clinton E. Farnham	1940-1942
Leon F. Sargent	1942-1957
Marianne C. Keyes	1947-1957
Neil H. Borden	1948-1958
John C. Willis	1951-1959
Vincent C. Ambrose	1952-1958
Mabelle M. Long	1953-1958
Eugene M. Pollard	1957-1962
Thomas M. Downes	1958-1963
Philip P. Wadsworth	1957-1965
Marion M. Chandler	1958-1967
Betsy G. Morton	1958-1973
John A. Dolan	1959-1965
Arthur W. Pratt	1963-1967
Philip B. Parsons, Jr.	1964-1970
H. Gardner Bradlee	1965-1970
Andrew L. Nichols	1966-1974
John M. Harrington, Jr.	1967-1968
Robert Whitman	1967-1968
Marion L. Willing	1967-1973
Edward F. O'Connell	1969-1976
James Blackham, Jr.	1970-1988
Robert C. O'Leary	1971-1972
Dudley D. B. Samoiloff	1972-1978
Alice D. Butare	1973-1974
Austin Broadhurst	1973-1986
Denis Golden	1974-1975
Loretta C. Redding	1974-1986
Robert W. Bailey	1975-1978
Alice K. Mirak	1978-1987
Clarence S. Borggaard	1978-1980
Betty J. Haley	1980-1985
Ellen B. Browning	1986-2002
Anne K. Nevins	1986-2001
Ernest A. Phillips, Jr.	1986-1998
Constance D. Papas	1987-1990
Lane McGovern	1988-2000
A. Deborah Pavelle	1990-2002
Samuel W. M. Thayer	1998-1999
Kevin J. Drum	1999-
Jon French	2000-
Leo F. Roche, Jr.	2001-
Jennifer L. Clifford	2002-2005
Denise Doherty Pappas	2002-
Matthew S. Twomey	2005-2006

Presidents of the Friends

Dudley D. B. Samoiloff	1981-1985
Anne K. Nevins	1985-1986
Judith Sutton Storeygard	1986-1987
Ronald B. Hertel	1987-1989
Madeleine Kaiser	1989-1992
Samuel Thayer	1992-1995
Betsy Coonley	1995-1997
Denise Pappas	1998-2000
Leo Roche	2000-2001
Rosemary Sullivan	2001-2004
Bonnie Alpert	2004-