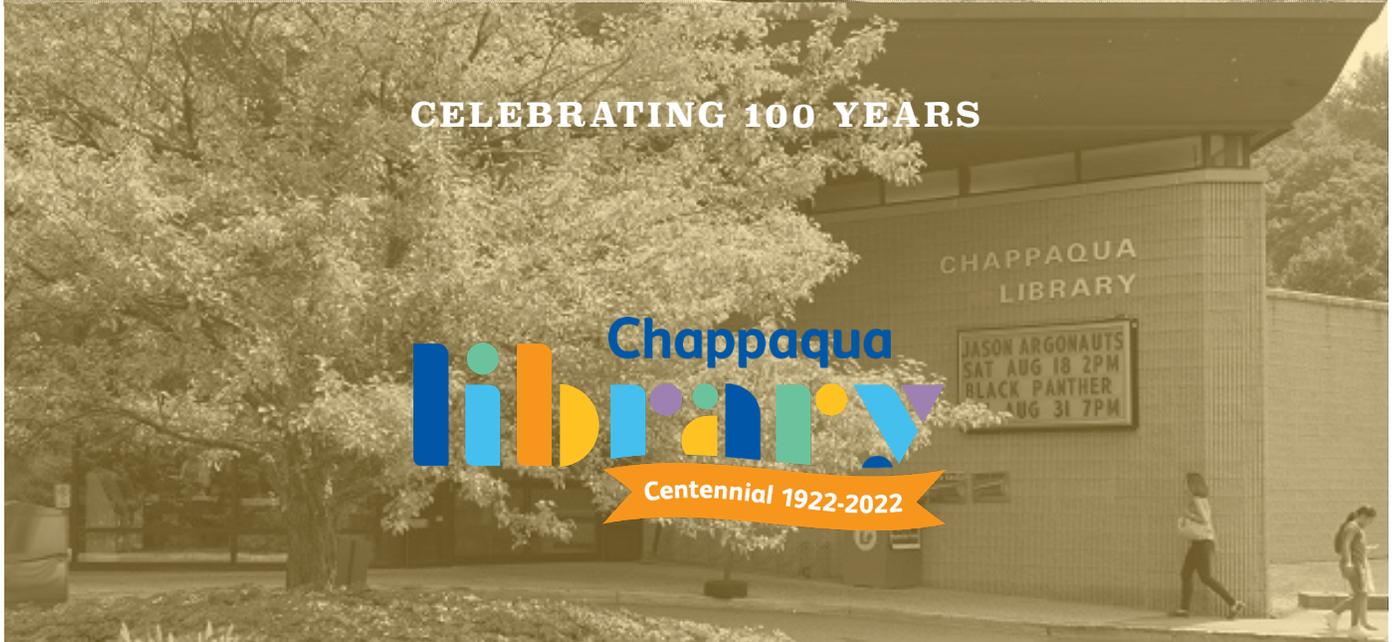


HISTORY
OF THE



CHAPPAQUA
LIBRARY



CELEBRATING 100 YEARS

Chappaqua
library

Centennial 1922-2022

A MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF THE LIBRARY

A centennial is a time to reflect and recommit. Over the past year, the Library Board asked for community and staff input to define future goals and affirm our identity. The result was the adoption of a forward looking Long-Range Strategic Plan and a striking logo that reflects the library's vibrant and inviting persona. This logo embodies diversity, inclusion and all the possibilities of our gem of a library. We wish to thank HGHS graduate and longtime Chappaqua resident Alex de Janosi for designing the new logo and visual identity. His talent and commitment to this project and the library is admirable.

The Chappaqua Library has a rich history. From the little farming community in 1879 to the visionary group of women who in 1922 when the library was chartered, organized, and found space in a general store by the railroad tracks, the library has grown dramatically. Starting with only 2,683 volumes in its collection, the library

now offers more than 254,000 physical and digital items and has added streaming services in addition to programs for patrons of all ages and space for the community to study, read and enjoy.

Today, the Chappaqua Library serves as a vibrant focal point of the community. The warm and welcoming environment is a place for sharing experiences, perspectives, and passions. People of all ages, backgrounds, and cultures come together to ignite intellectual curiosity, build broader understanding, and cultivate connections.

The dynamic resources, programs and services offered by our knowledgeable staff keep pace with our evolving world. Looking ahead to the future, our dedicated team is committed to exploring opportunities to engage the community with programs and services that are innovative, exciting and inclusive, and technologies that ease access to our resources.

Andrew Farber, Library Director, May 2022

EARLY EFFORTS

The Chappaqua Library is now a well-established and greatly cherished public institution, but the history of its founding is at best fragmentary. The first document concerning it appeared in 1879, when a catalog was published of about 475 books in its collection. Most were literary classics, supplemented by non-fiction on such subjects as history, politics, temperance, and agriculture. The latter category included a work by a local author, *What I Know of Farming* by Horace Greeley, detailing his efforts at science-based agriculture on his property near the village.¹

This brief catalog provides no information, though, about where the library was located or what services it provided. In any event, it had ceased operations by 1897, when a newspaper article described in detail the formation of a new library association.² Articles the following year indicate that the library had been open one day a week, on Saturday afternoons, that it had hosted some 2500 to 3000 visitors over the preceding months, and that it closed for the summer. After that, there is apparently no documentation of the library, where it was located, or how long it remained in operation.³

Cover images top to bottom: Known location of the early library in 1922, as it was photographed in 1930. Senter Street library, circa 1960. Current library, 2018.

THE STORE ON HUNTS PLACE

The history of the library as a continuing institution really begins in 1922. Elise Hewitt Bayley had organized a committee of women volunteers to operate the library on an informal basis, and on April 18 she spearheaded a public meeting to discuss its future. Forty-five Chappaqua citizens attended, and agreed without dissent that the library needed a more formal structure and a more reliable base of support. They decided to form a new organization, The Chappaqua Library Association, which would obtain a charter from the New York State Department of Education, and would solicit contributions to cover expenses such as rent and

book purchases. Thirty-one pledges were received on the spot.⁴

Seven trustees were elected that night to lead the new organization – all men, but all active in the community and reliably generous. John I.D. Bristol was the largest landowner and real-estate developer in Chappaqua and a major philanthropist, who had donated the site for the Greeley statue and a firehouse and fire engine for a station on Bedford Road. The Reverend Dr. Frank M. Clendenin was the husband of Horace Greeley’s daughter Gabrielle, and with his wife had donated the land for the Chappaqua railroad station and built the Episcopal Church of St. Mary

In 1922, the Chappaqua Library occupied the main floor of this former grocery store, here shown as it was photographed in the early 1900s. It was located west of the railroad tracks, on what was then the extension of Main Street and is now Hunts Place.



the Virgin. Charles Haydock was a successful New York banker and stock broker who had a particularly strong interest in education and would later serve on the Chappaqua school board. Henry Pratt was the longtime New York Central stationmaster, who also served as a school trustee and was one of the founders of the Chappaqua Congregational Church. Howard Washburn, was a Quaker descendant who for many years served as New Castle Supervisor. Robert Haviland was an active Quaker and the proprietor of an extensive lumberyard on North Greeley Avenue. He was the first chairman of the library association and served in that capacity for several years.⁵

Perhaps the most important of all the first trustees was architect Alfred Busselle. Originally from New York, he had married a descendant of the pioneer Haight family and had adopted Chappaqua as his permanent home. He would

later become a founding member of the Planning Board, which was responsible for the direction of the town's development. At the meeting, he was chosen Secretary of the association, and served in that capacity for almost twenty years, longer than any other trustee. And that was not his only contribution to the institution, nor the most important.

The new library opened on June 12, 1922.⁶ For its first home, the library association rented space in a former store, located west of the railroad tracks, at the corner of Hunts Lane and what is now Hunts Place.⁷ Elizabeth Wardwell, who was hired as a library assistant in 1924 and became the library's longest-serving staff member, provided in 1977 a vivid recollection of the premises.

The library building [had] five or six concrete steps leading to its central door,

King Street. In the 1920s, downtown Chappaqua was undergoing rapid growth and change, as the community was becoming transformed into a suburb. All these buildings on King Street would be replaced or radically altered.



and a wide shop window on each side. Inside there were a couple of long tables painted black, and several Windsor chairs painted turquoise. Six low bookcases held a rather motley collection of books ...The library was open from three in the afternoon until nine on Wednesdays and Fridays. On Wednesdays I would arrive at 2:45, and on the concrete steps would be sitting a very elderly gentleman ...who, coming in with three books – always three – would say “These are the three best books I ever read.” Or, sadly, “These are the three worst books I ever read.”⁸

In 1925, two volunteers, Maida Gedney Moran and Emma Hyatt, were appointed as librarian and assistant librarian, and would continue to serve for almost two decades.⁹ A repeating pattern appeared during this period: just as soon as more services were offered, there was a jump in demand for them. As early as 1926, the book collection had risen into the thousands, the reading room was open for three afternoons a week, and the library not only needed more space, but also a building of its own.

The construction of a new library was not the only major event to take place in Chappaqua during 1930. In September, the community celebrated its 200th birthday and the opening of the new railroad bridge with a great parade and a dedication ceremony. Here the parade is shown proceeding down King Street, just past the intersection with Greeley Avenue.



THE FIRST BUILDING: 10 SENTER STREET

In 1927, the trustees concluded that the best site for a new library would be a small tract on Senter Street, at the northern end of the property given by Gabrielle Greeley Clendenin for the new Horace Greeley School.¹⁰ Negotiations with the Board of Education proved successful, and the tract was formally deeded to the Chappaqua Library Association, at no cost, in the fall of 1929.¹¹

Meanwhile, Alfred Busselle, voluntarily and by common assent, became the architect for the new building, presenting his preliminary plans in June, 1928.¹² He chose the architectural style known as Collegiate Gothic, a blend of English Medieval and Tudor styles, loosely based upon models at Oxford and Cambridge Universities, and considered appropriate for academic buildings of all kinds. The plans for the 1800-square-foot structure were completed in the fall of 1929, and at the same time a fundraising campaign, chaired by Robert Haviland, began to raise the \$21,000 estimated cost of construction.

The first round of contractors' bids came in

too high,¹³ but after Busselle made some minor adjustments to the plans,¹⁴ the second round produced several satisfactory bids, and in the spring of 1930, the contract was awarded to local builder Thomas W. Mills.¹⁵ He was able to complete construction quickly enough for the building to open by the end of the year.

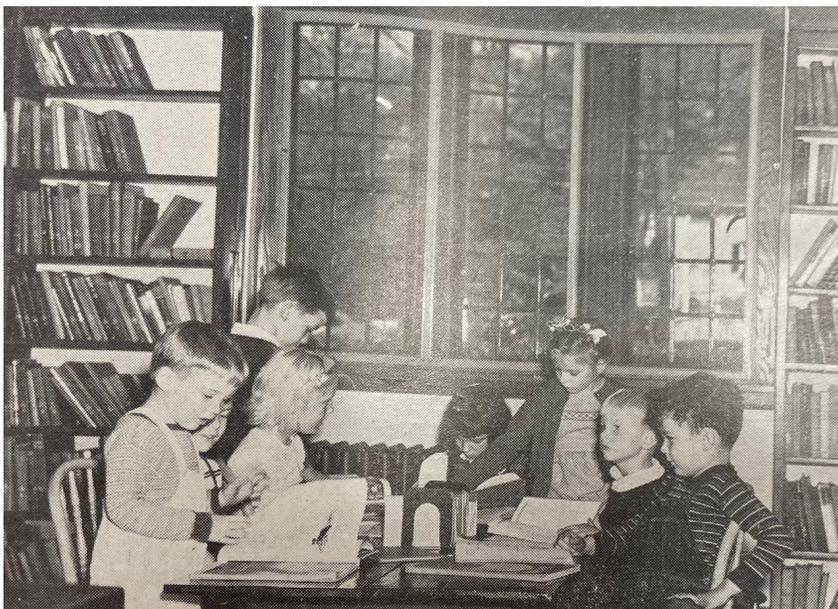
The new library was an immediate success, especially among the small staff. As Elizabeth Wardwell put it:

Two floors and all sorts of room! An office! A fireplace! Plumbing! ...Now there was a real children's department ...and a story hour one morning a week. And good new [childrens'] books were added monthly, as were books for adults.¹⁶

She also recalled a vital change in the library's legal status that occurred about the same time. As a state-chartered educational institution, it was entitled, like the school district, to raise money by local taxes, and was no longer dependent upon donations for its operating budget.¹⁷

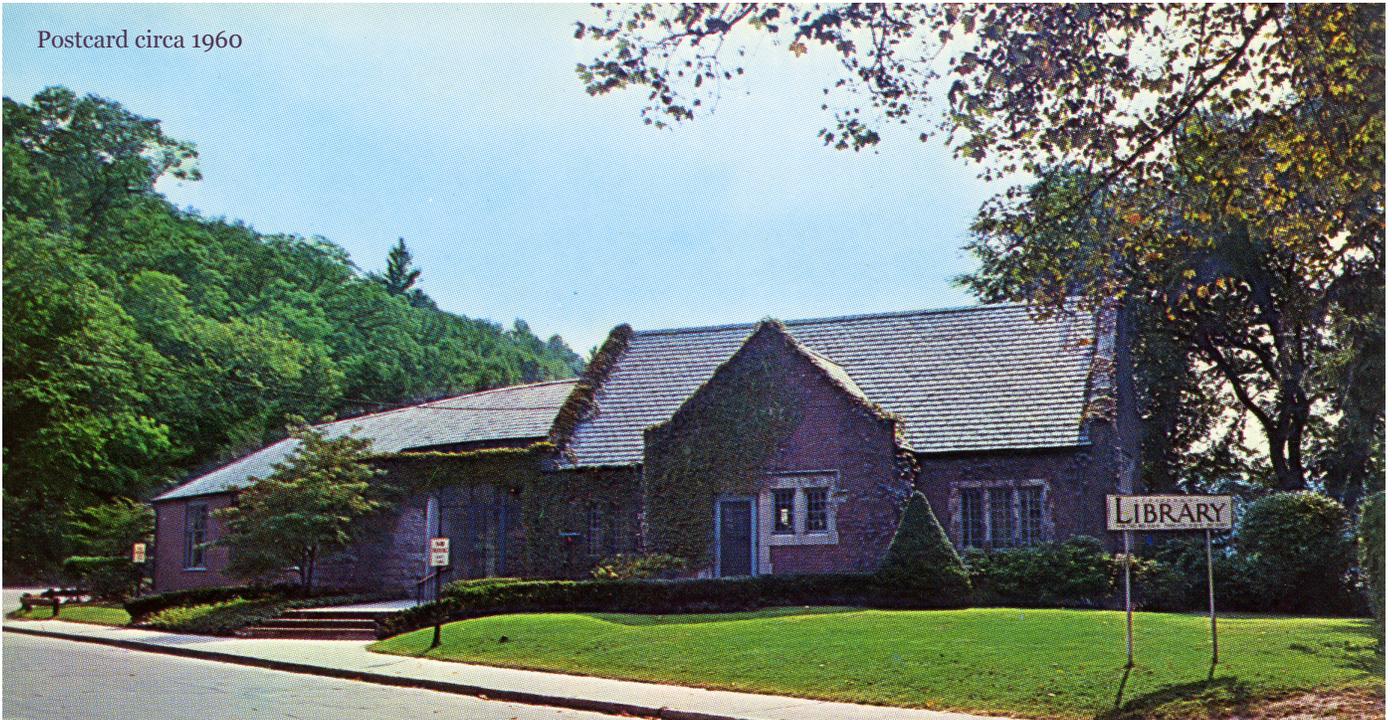
The building continued to serve the community successfully through the Depression and World War II, and the library's collections and services continued to expand. In 1944, the volunteer librarians, Maida Moran and Emma Hyatt, resigned,¹⁸ and the first professional librarian, Bernice Merritt, was hired to succeed them. Under her direction, the staff was reorganized and the library hours were doubled. She left two years later for a position at a larger library, and was succeeded by Irene Rope, who served until 1950, and then by Margaret Handley, who would remain until 1966.¹⁹

Story Time at Senter Street circa 1945



A SUBSTANTIAL ADDITION

Postcard circa 1960



Meanwhile, the population of Chappaqua had risen exponentially since the war, and the library again needed more space. Within a year following Margaret Handley's appointment, the library trustees began considering ways to provide it.²⁰ In the spring of 1952, they decided upon an addition to the west side of the existing building and began negotiating with the Board of Education for extra land to accommodate it.²¹ In the fall, a campaign was launched to raise \$75,000 for the project.²²

A local architect was again commissioned – James Renwick Thomson, who had designed the Horace Greeley School (Now the Robert E. Bell Middle School) back in the 1920s. Like Alfred Busselle before him, he appears to have contributed his services gratis. He did not attempt to match the Collegiate Gothic style of the original, but designed a thoroughly modern structure, with much larger windows and a higher ceiling. But by extending the original roofline and using the new entrance as a transition point,

he managed to create a graceful combination of the two different sections. Construction began in 1953 and was completed in the fall of 1954. The addition more than doubled the space of the original building, and was expected to fulfill the library's needs for at least twenty years.

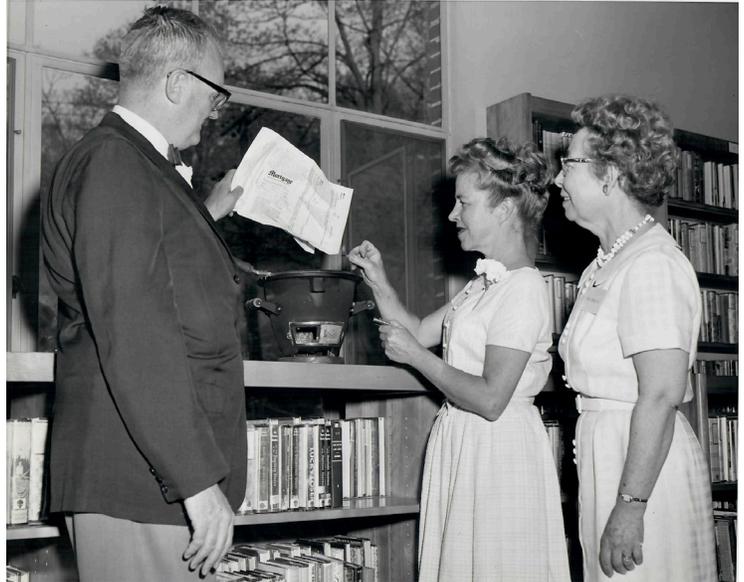
Not unexpectedly, the larger space encouraged more use. Attendance and circulation immediately increased,²³ as did the need for increased staff to provide library services. In December, 1954, for example, the first professional children's librarian, Alice T. Whelan, was hired. Within a decade, however, it became evident that still more space would be needed, and the library board commenced making plans for expansion.

The first plan proposed by the board was simply a larger building on the existing site, and in 1963 the board negotiated with the school board for a small piece of additional land to accommodate it. However, it soon became evident that this expansion would be inadequate,

and only a new building on a larger property would satisfy future needs. A long and frustrating search for an appropriate site resulted, while conditions at the library itself deteriorated. By 1966, when Margaret Handley retired and was succeeded by Alice W. Grafflin, the library was becoming overcrowding, and by the end of the decade the situation became increasingly dire.²⁴

In 1970, by community vote, the library changed its status from a free association library to a school district library, in order to give it greater flexibility in acquiring property and to eventually issue bonds to finance a new building. The Friends of the Library was founded in 1972 to help build public support

for the project. Finally, in 1974, board president Dorsey Whitestone persuaded Herbert Grunfeld to donate three acres of vacant land on South Greeley Avenue, for the explicit use of a new library building. The search was over.²⁵

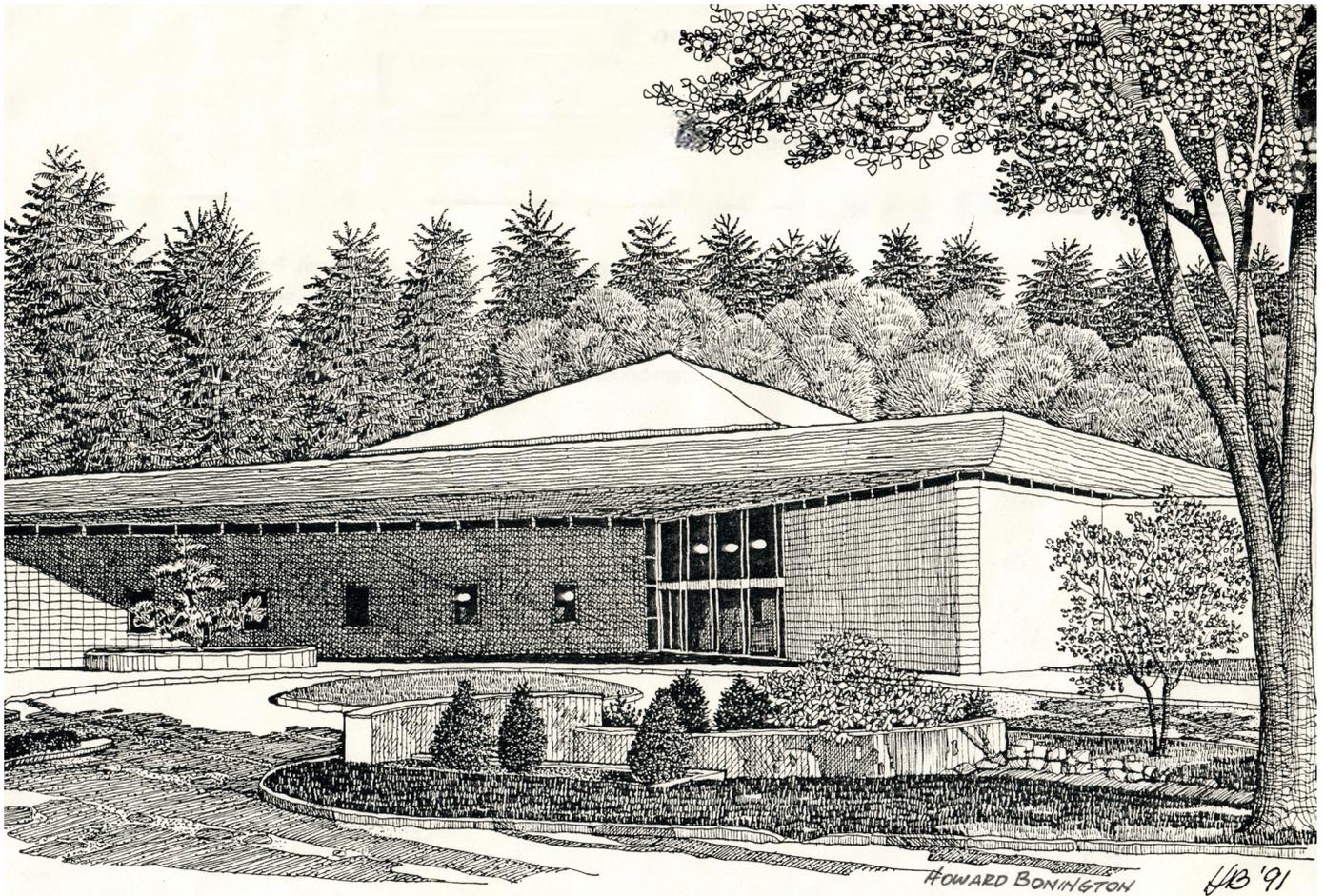


Burning the \$10,500 that helped finance the new wing. From left to right: Library Board members Edward M. Murtfeldt and Anne Maulsby, and library director Margaret Handley. *North Westchester Times New Castle Tribune*, May 3, 1962.

Severe overcrowding. 1972.



THE PRESENT BUILDING: 195 SOUTH GREELEY AVENUE



The new building was designed by local architect Philip M. Chu in a strikingly modern style. It opened in December, 1978, with Doris Lowenfels, who had succeeded Alice Grafflin in 1973, as its first director. Its greatly enlarged space allowed it not only to expand its traditional services but to enter new areas such as media and computers. The building contained entirely new facilities, such as study rooms, an art gallery, a private garden, and a 250-seat theater that was used not only for library programs but also by the community for a wide range of performances and other events.

The new library was expected to suffice unaltered for many years, but history inevitably

repeated itself. In 1986, two years after Mark P. Hasskarl took over as director, a children's program room was added to accommodate the growing number of children's activities and small group meetings. In 2006, most of the recessed entrance was enclosed, adding considerable space to the interior, and triggering a major rearrangement of its collections and services. This transformation was completed under the supervision of Pam Thornton, who succeeded Mark Hasskarl in 2007. She also oversaw the most recent construction, starting in 2018, of a much-enlarged children's room, to provide space not only for a growing collection but also for pre-teens to congregate. At the same time, new

spaces for young-adult activities were subdivided within the main interior. These included a study room, a teen hangout room, and a teen program room with movable furniture that can also be

used by the general public. These changes were completed in 2021, a year after Ms. Thornton's retirement and the appointment of the present director, Andrew Farber.

Periodical reading area with modern Bertoia chairs, 1979



ENDNOTES

1 Margaret Handley, "Chappaqua Library at 80," *Patent Trader*, April 9, 1959, pp. 1-2.

2 "Chappaqua Library: An Association Organized to Maintain a Reading Room and Library," *The Item*, February 18, 1897, p. 1.

3 "Library Notes," *The Item*, April 7, 1898, p. 1. "Library Items," *The Item*, August 11, 1898, p. 1.

4 Alfred Busselle, compiler, *Minutes and Other Records of the Chappaqua Library*, from 1922-1941, April 18, 1922, Chappaqua Public Library archives. Margaret Handley, "Library Has Grown with the Town," *New Castle Tribune*, November 14, 1952, p.6.

5 Family and real estate files, New Castle Historical Society.

6 Margaret Handley, "Library Has Grown with the Town," *New Castle Tribune*, November 14, 1952, p.6.

7 *Minutes and Other Records of the Chappaqua Library*, April 26, 1922.

8 Elizabeth Wardwell, "Looking Back – the Chappaqua Library's 53 years," *Patent Trader*, April 16, 1977, p. 9.

9 "Chappaqua Librarians Resign," *New Castle Tribune*, April 14, 1944.

¹⁰ *Minutes and Other Records of the Chappaqua Library*, April 26, 1926, and March 28, 1927.

¹¹ Westchester County Land Records, Deeds: Chappaqua Central School District No. 4 to Chappaqua Library Association, signed Mar 18, 1928, recorded Mar 18, 1930, L. 3015 p. 384.

¹² "Library Making Plans to Erect Its Own Building," *New Castle Tribune*, April 19, 1928, p. 1. *Minutes and Other Records of the Chappaqua Library*, June 19, 1928.

¹³ *Minutes and Other Records of the Chappaqua Library*, December 3, 1929.

¹⁴ *Minutes and Other Records of the Chappaqua Library*, Alfred Busselle to John I.D. Bristol, March 20, 1930.

¹⁵ *Minutes and Other Records of the Chappaqua Library*, March 31, 1930.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Wardwell, "Looking Back...", *Patent Trader*, April 16, 1977, p. 9.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Wardwell, "Looking Back..." *Minutes and Other Records of the Chappaqua Library*, April 15, 1931.

¹⁸ Chappaqua Librarians Resign," *New Castle Tribune*, April 14, 1944.

¹⁹ Margaret Handley, "Library Has Grown with the Town," *New Castle Tribune*, November 14, 1952, p.6.

²⁰ "Chappaqua Library Investigates Need for Added Space," *New Castle News*, September 4, 1951, pp. 1, 4.

²¹ "Library Board Gives Approval for Expansion," *New Castle Tribune*, May 23, 1952, p. 1. Westchester County Land Records, Deeds: Chappaqua Central School District No. 4 to Chappaqua Library, signed July 2, 1953, recorded Oct 7, 1953, L. 5260 p. 484.

²² "Library Opens Fund Campaign for New Wing," *New Castle Tribune*, September 5, 1952, p. 1.

²³ "Patronage Shows Large Increase Since Addition of Modernized Wing," *Chappaqua Sun*, November 11, 1954, p.2. "A Friendly Invitation," *Chappaqua Sun*, January 6, 1955, p.2. "Library Conducts Open House at Annual Meeting Friday," *New Castle Tribune*, January 14, 1955, p.1.

²⁴ Peggy Rice, "Tight Squeeze Limits Chappaqua Library," *The Reporter Dispatch*, January 19, 1969.

²⁵ Vicki Epstein, "Chappaqua Library to Get Deed," *Patent Trader*, December 19, 1974.



Children's room,
1980s

THE LIBRARY TODAY



Llamas In the Library! and children's librarian Robbin Friedman, 2018



Circa 2006

Hillary Clinton book signing and children's librarian Miriam Lang Budin, 2016



Periodical corner, circa 2018





New tech in the new teen hangout room, November 2021



Ribbon cutting ceremony for the expanded children's room, November 2021. Left to right: Andrew Farber, Elizabeth Farkas Haymson, Nishat Hydari, Ronni Diamondstein and Lane Shea

Annual used book sale, circa 2016



FRIENDS OF THE CHAPPAQUA LIBRARY

The Friends was founded in 1972 to support the building of a new library. Today the Friends works to encourage, receive and administer gifts for special items or projects not covered in the library's operating budget and to support the library in developing its services and facilities. The organization raises funds for its gifts from membership fees and its popular annual used-book sale.

After the library's renovations were completed in 2021, the Friends provided \$60,000 in new furniture and technology to enhance the renovated spaces. They worked to make the library more inviting to visitors during the pandemic, funding the purchase of new outdoor tables and chairs as well as a tent for the courtyard, which allowed for outdoor programming during the summer months.

Patrons enjoying newly reupholstered couch, a gift from the Friends, 2022



PIVOTING DURING COVID

The library closed in March, 2020, during the COVID-19 global pandemic. It reopened for curbside service two months later, but because of continued danger didn't return to pre-COVID hours and services until January, 2022.

In the interim, the library expanded remote services, increased e-book purchases, and curbside pickup of physical materials.

Using Zoom technology, adult programming continued, with author talks, book discussions, writing workshops, a bi-monthly art series, lectures, the Foreign Policy Discussion Group, the Jazz at Lincoln Center monthly concert series, and the Chinese Conversation Club. Large, in-person events were allowed by the fall of 2021, during times of low-case count, and held at the Chappaqua Performing Arts Center. Masks and social distancing were mandatory.

When the library was closed to the public, the teen room used Zoom to offer movie discussion groups, art lectures from the Frick museum, cooking classes, arts and crafts, sketching sessions, and chess games. Teens made greeting cards for nursing homes and hospitals,

keeping a connection with residents to avoid social isolation.

In the immediate shutdown, the children's room used social media to broadcast story time songs, then, quickly switched to zoom for story time, book discussions, and cooking classes. Grab-and-go crafts were offered for curbside pickup. When the library reopened to the public, storytimes were held in the large courtyard. Spots filled up quickly, necessitating additional storytimes in the parking lot. Large events, such as the Bubble Bus and the ice cream social, also took place outdoors.

To keep the library community strong yet safe, the annual holiday party became an online vote for the best holiday-inspired outfit.

Today, adult programming is slowly returning to pre-pandemic levels. As restrictions lessen, some programs, such as the Opera Club and the Bridge Club, will again be offered in person, as will be in-person concerts. Teens are back to having weekly programs, including celebrating the library's history during its centennial, viewing movies, creating reading lists, engaging in crafts, and starting an heirloom garden.



Huma Abedin book signing held at the Chappaqua Performing Arts Center. Left to right: Terri-Ann Chinsee, Robbin Friedman, Denise Mincin, Andrew Farber, Thao Nguyen, Carrie Krams, Joan Kuhn, Amy Berger and Huma Abedin, November 2021.



Courtyard storytime, 2020



Celebrating the holidays safely, 2021. Top: Dilara Higgins and Barbara LeSauvage. Bottom: Becky DeBello



Holi paint throwing, 2022



Anne Bradie, Barbara LeSauvage, Ann Fisher at the circulation desk, 2022



Children's librarian Julie Ann Polasko with her nephew John Polasko enjoying the Bubble Bus, 2021

DID YOU KNOW?

There used to be a **MILLWOOD BRANCH**.

In 1950 it was open two days a week in the basement of Our Lady of the Wayside church on Route 100. Its collection consisted mainly of Little Golden Books, and there were frequent exchanges with the main library. When it ceased operation is not known.

ALICE GRAFFLIN, Library Director during the difficult years from 1966 to 1973, was the widow of Douglas G. Grafflin, the revered principal of the Horace Greeley School when it encompassed all grades from third through high school (the building is now the Robert E. Bell Middle School). One of our elementary schools is named in his honor.

The **PRESENT LIBRARY PROPERTY** was once part of Horace Greeley's farm. The 78-acre farm extended from King Street to Tercia Brook, and from the railroad to Bedford Road. The ancient evergreen trees that mark the boundary between the library and the Church of St. Mary the Virgin are the survivors of a grove that Greeley planted, as a windbreak to shelter his vegetable garden. That garden is now occupied by the library and its garden.



Big Truck Day, 2022

LIBRARY DIRECTORS

Elise Hewitt Bayley 1922
Maida Gedney Moran 1925
Bernice Merritt 1944
Margaret Handley 1950
Alice W. Grafflin 1966
Doris B. Lowenfels 1973
Mark P. Hasskarl 1984
Pamela Thornton 2007
Andrew Farber 2020

LIBRARY BOARD

Elizabeth Haymson
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Shohreh Anand
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Ronni Diamondstein
Past President

Brian Cook

Pam Moskowitz

Jennifer Fahey



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