

# **The Marlborough Public Library**

**1870 to 2010**



**In commemoration of the  
350th Anniversary  
of the founding of Marlborough**

## DEDICATION

Dictionary.com defines a library as: "...a place set apart to contain books, periodicals, and other material for reading, viewing, listening, study, or reference; as a room, set of rooms, or building where books may be read or borrowed."

But a library is much more than that. Judging by what I have read, it must also be a place that brings out the best in people, or attracts the best people, because Marlborough has had more than its share of hard-working, dedicated, helpful people who not only cared for the books and other materials in their custody, but have consistently gone out of their way to assist the patrons of the library who have come to read and borrow its books.

This booklet is dedicated to the countless number of trustees, librarians, assistants, volunteers, friends, and donors who, over the last one hundred and forty years, have contributed their time, treasure, and talent to the Marlborough Public Library.

*Joan Hartley Abshire*  
for the Marlborough Historical Society  
2010



"Slow and steady wins the race."

*Aesop*

## THE MARLBOROUGH PUBLIC LIBRARY

Libraries have come a long way from the five thousand year old clay tablets found in Mesopotamia and the scrolls of the Great Library of Alexandria. The phrase “the best things in life are free” certainly applies to your library card today. For instance, the Marlborough Public Library, not only has books on every subject imaginable, but also newspapers, periodicals, films, recordings, digital media, and computers with access to the internet. Free passes are available for many of the most popular museums, zoos and gardens in central and eastern Massachusetts. And if you haven’t ever checked the events schedule on the library’s web page I think you’ll be amazed at all the wonderful things going on. Our library is certainly living up to its mission statement of “creating a community meeting house where citizens of all ages are free to gather and pursue common educational, cultural and recreational interests.”

Our ancestors weren’t so fortunate. Libraries were pretty much limited to churches, universities, and those individuals wealthy enough to have their own collections. Beginning in colonial days there were “social libraries,” an invention of Benjamin Franklin, where a group of people would get together and pool their resources, but there was usually a membership and/or annual fee and were accessible only to the members. According to historian Charles Hudson, one of this type was begun in Marlborough as early as 1792. It had sixty members who each paid \$2.50 a share plus an annual fee of twenty-five cents.

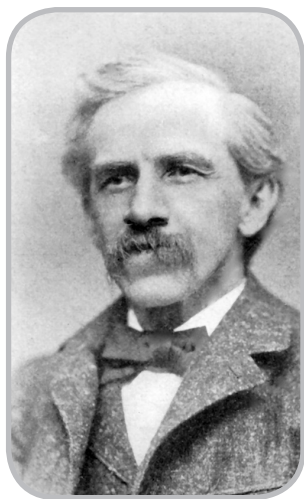
Another was the Marlborough Mechanics’ Institute, organized in 1853, which used the proceeds from a fair in 1859 to purchase 450 books for the establishment of a library in the Union (now Warren) Block for the use of its members who were charged a yearly fee of one dollar. This library flourished over the next decade or so and by 1870 they had accumulated 1,100 books.

### 1870 - THE BEGINNING

At Marlborough’s annual town meeting on April 4, 1870, it was voted to establish a free public library. These nine citizens were elected as a Board of Trustees: Chairman Edward L. Bigelow, John O’Connell, the Rev. Simon T. Aldrich, Frank A. Howe, Thomas Corey, Bernard Brewin, Nahum Witherbee, Samuel Howe and Cornelius Flynn.

The Mechanics’ Institute agreed to donate its collection as a foundation, the town appropriated \$1,300, the citizens of Marlborough donated money, books, art and other treasures and on January 18, 1871, the library opened its doors in the Town Hall. The number of volumes was 2,170.

Mr. **Edward L. Bigelow**, the “Father of the Marlborough Public Library,” was the first contributor, and over the course of his lifetime was instrumental in making the library very successful. He was the son of Lambert Bigelow, the proprietor of Morse & Bigelow, a very successful general store on Lincoln Street. Edward’s



*Edward L. Bigelow*

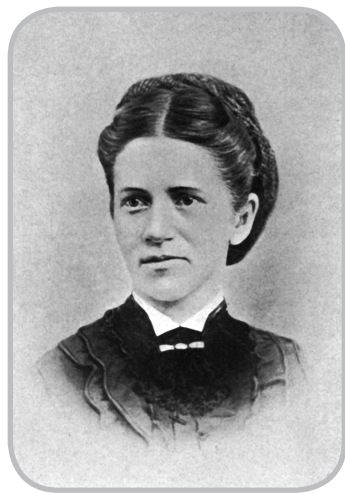
wife was Ella A. Bigelow the author of Marlborough's history written in 1910. He was studying to become a civil engineer when his father became ill and so he came back to help with the store, and worked there the remainder of his life. He was so well thought of that in 1898 he was approached by all three political parties to run for mayor, but declined.

He was a simple, charitable man, loved by all, and it was said that no one ever approached him for help and was refused. He loved baseball and Marlborough, especially the Public Library to which he donated hundreds of books and many other treasures. He was the first chairman of the trustees in 1870 and every year thereafter for 43 years. When he died in 1915 his obituary stated that he was "a man of few words, but his kindnesses were many."

The first librarian, **Lizzie S. Wright**, a farmer's daughter, was born in Peterborough, NH, but grew up in Marlborough. She served as Librarian for twelve years. Her unfortunate demise, from malarial fever, was considered a severe blow to the library. The year was 1882 and she was 44 years old.

According to the annual report, she was "much loved, especially by the younger people. During her twelve years of service she took much personal interest in each patron of the library. All her duties were cheerfully and faithfully performed and she was at all times working for the best interest of the library."

When Lizzie died, Sarah Elizabeth Cotting, who had been assistant for several years, became the new Librarian.



*Lizzie S. Wright*



*Hannah Elizabeth Bigelow*

**Hannah Elizabeth Bigelow**, born in Berlin, was an educated and wealthy woman, a doctor who never practiced, but contributed much to the hospital and the city of Marlborough where she spent most of her life. Among her many gifts to the library were a \$500 trust fund in memory of her father, and a bequest of \$5,000 for the purchase of new books. She served as a library trustee for fifteen years and upon her death in 1898 the following quote was recorded in the librarian's report: "What she had of mind, of strength, of wealth, was hers to use for others; and quiet and retiring as was her life it was spent unselfishly in deeds of kindness and in time and labor for the public good."

In the beginning, the library occupied just one room in the town hall building. In 1881 a reading and periodical room was opened in the space vacated by the First National Bank; in 1884 a former waiting room was renovated for students and trustees; and in 1897

another small room was added in the space formerly occupied by the Post Office. At this time the book count was up to 25,000 and included many valuable town histories, including one donated by the Reverend Horatio Alger. The library was rapidly outgrowing the available space. The 1900 Trustees' Annual Report states that they had been "appealing for more space for ten years, to no avail," but help was just around the corner.

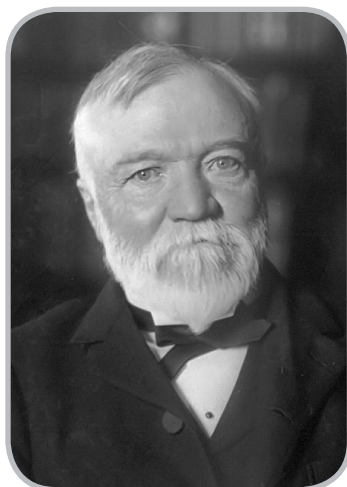
### 1901 - THE VISION

In 1901 **Walter Burleigh Morse** was elected mayor of Marlborough. Walter, born in Marlborough in 1864, was the first newsboy in the town, later became president of the company that owned the Enterprise, was connected with the Wheeler Express Co., was trustee of one bank and president of another, and councilman for several years before becoming mayor of Marlborough for the years 1901, 2 and 3.

He was the moving force behind the Carnegie funding for the Public Library, beginning shortly after taking office by setting up a committee to help him achieve his goal. The committee put together a presentation book for Mr. Carnegie consisting of facts and photos about the present library and the town, the need for a library building, and the inability of the town to provide it.



*Walter Burleigh Morse*



*Andrew Carnegie*

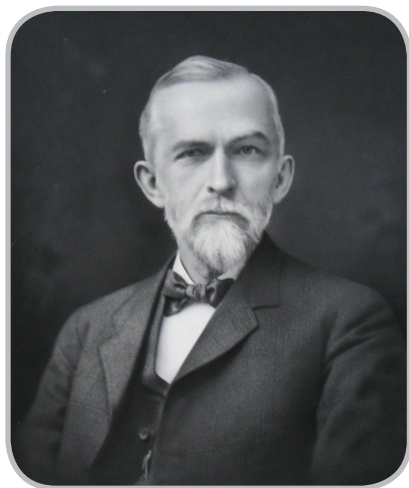
**Andrew Carnegie's** life began in Scotland where he was born to a working class family who immigrated to America in 1848. He began his career at the age of thirteen working in a textile mill and from this humble beginning, rose to become a steel industrialist, millionaire, and philanthropist. He believed that the wealthy had an obligation to give back to society, and was especially generous to libraries, funding over 2,500 both here and in other countries as well. But he also believed that this funding should be in the form of assistance rather than charity. He felt that the beneficiaries of his generosity should also do what they could to help themselves.

Mayor Morse made two unsuccessful trips to New York to see Mr. Carnegie, but on the second was able to speak with his secretary and after a few letters had passed, finally received the response he sought. Mr. Andrew Carnegie would provide \$30,000 for the new library with the stipulation that the city would furnish the land and no less than \$3,000 a year for its



support. It's important to stress the role that Mayor Morse played in this little drama. It was his drive and determination that achieved its success.

In 1902 the site for the new library was finalized and two of Marlborough's most prominent citizens, S. H. Howe and John A. Frye, both successful shoe manufacturers, donated the two lots at the corner of Bates Avenue and West Main Street which together contained about 30,000 square feet and was valued at \$11,000. The house on the lot where the library building stands was originally the home of the Reverend Asa Packard, built in 1798. This house which had been the property of Dennis and Sophia Witherbee and their family for the past fifty years, was torn down when the library was constructed.

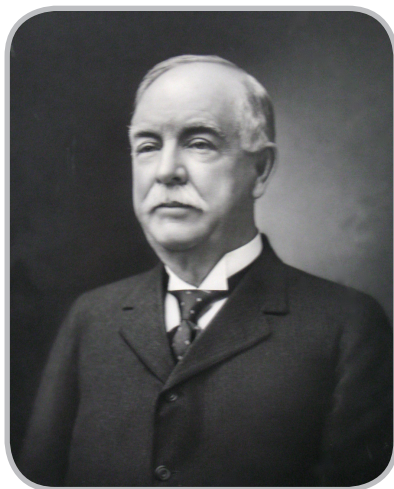


*Simon Herbert Howe*

Born in Marlborough, **Simon Herbert Howe** graduated from Marlborough High School, learned shoe making from John Stevens and with his brother Lewis, went into that business in their father's old cooper shop. He was very successful and eventually owned several shoe factories including the Diamond factories A, F, M and O. In 1890 he was elected the first mayor of the city. His obituary stated: "If there is one attribute that suggests itself when Mr. Howe's name is mentioned it is that of charity. The poor and suffering have always found a friend in Mr. Howe and many a person whose life was darkened by misfortune and sorrow can testify to his large heart."

**John Addison Frye** was born and educated in Marlborough, and began his career in our shoe shops where he worked for several years learning the business from the ground up. He established the Frye Shoe Company which became known the world over for the quality of its boots and shoes, and is still making them today, although no longer in Marlborough. John was a hard worker and an innovator. His factory was the first to have electricity. Frye Shoe Co. made boots for Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders and for Jackie Kennedy.

The city allocated \$5,000 for construction of the library and three more Marlborough citizens, Michael Burke, Hannah (Stearns) Swift and Winslow Morse Warren, each added \$1,000 to the building fund.



*John Addison Frye*

## 1902 - CITY HALL BURNS TO THE GROUND

Just as things were starting to look up for the new library, tragedy struck. On Christmas night, 1902, a terrible fire destroyed the City Hall, including most of the contents of the library. The trustees, librarian and assistants set up temporary quarters in the Hunter's Block and a vastly depleted library was opened once again less than two months after the fire. On the shelves were 2,111 volumes, not including reference books. Eleven hundred books had been donated by the public, many of which had been in circulation and were returned, and about 400 volumes were rescued from the ruins of the city hall, and rebound.

The John A. Rawlins Post 43 made available their library room in the G.A.R. Building, on the corner of Rawlins Ave., as a storage place for the donations being made for the new Carnegie library. There were some very generous gifts made of money, books, manuscripts, photographs and a large variety of art objects including paintings and statuary. One significant contribution was \$638.15, the proceeds of a concert by Marlborough High School students and Bird's orchestra, held in the Marlborough theatre.



## 1904 - THE CARNEGIE LIBRARY

In the spring of 1903, contracts were signed for the construction of the new library. The architects chosen were Peabody & Stearns of Boston, and the builders, J.E. Warren & Co. of Marlborough. The building was completed in the fall of 1904 and the formal dedication was held on October 20 of that year.

On that day an immense throng of 3,500 people visited their beautiful new library. There were speeches made and many officials and V.I.P's were on hand, including ex-Mayor Morse who was there for most of the day. Also present was Trustee Chairman Edward L. Bigelow who must have relished the end result of his many years of hard work and support of the library. The following year he donated another 571 books. His generosity was constant and enduring.

Unfortunately, Mrs. **Hannah Swift** didn't live to see the new library that was the beneficiary of her generous thousand dollar donation. Hannah Stearns was born and raised in Brookline. In 1858 she married William J. Swift and they moved to 57 West Main Street where they raised a family. Their



*Hannah Swift*

daughter, Susie, was the wife of Walter B. Morse, the mayor who was so instrumental in acquiring the Carnegie money for the library.

Another relative of Walter B. Morse, his uncle Charles F. Morse, was described by Ella Bigelow as being, “one of the most companionable and sympathetic of men.” In the early 1900s ‘Charley’ was browsing in a second hand shop in London when he came across a large, old, 1567 DeCosta painting of Hagar and Ishmael (Gen. 16:21), rolled up, dusty and dirty on the shop floor. He struck a bargain with the owner, took the painting home, and had it cleaned and framed. One day on a visit to the library in 1907, he suggested to the Chairman of the Trustees that there was no reason why his painting shouldn’t hang in the library and offered to have it packed and sent there. The offer was gratefully accepted and the six and a half by five foot painting was hung in the east wing. After it had been there for a few years it was taken for granted that it was a permanent possession, but some time after Charley’s death in 1910, one of his heirs appeared and wanted it back. The board felt that Charley’s intention had been for the library to keep it, but since he had never specifically said so, and there was nothing in writing, they felt they had to return it.



*Peter Ambrose McKenna*

One exceptional artifact that, fortunately, is still in the possession of the library is the bronze bust of Peter Ambrose McKenna, the much loved, but somewhat controversial pastor of the Immaculate Conception Parish. He died in 1897 after twenty years of service. A few months later the Father McKenna Literary Union was established. The members held a week long fair to raise money for a memorial, then commissioned Samuel J. Kitson a skilled and versatile artisan who had already created many excellent works of art. When the bust of Fr. McKenna was completed the members were informed that Kitson considered this work his “masterpiece.” They voted to place the bust in the library, if its Board of Trustees would agree, but because of the Christmas Day fire at the city hall they waited until after the new library was opened. On March 9, 1905 the bust

was presented to the Marlborough Public Library, and can still be seen today in the Periodicals Room. It truly is an extraordinary work of art.

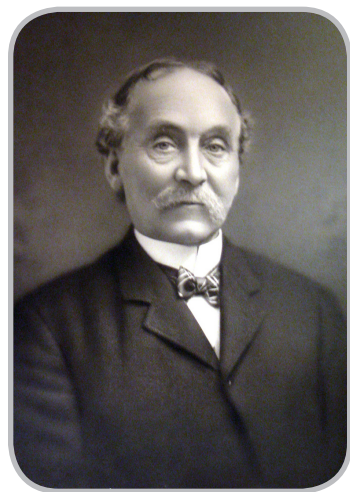
Also in that same room are three John Rogers statue groups donated around the same time. These groups were extremely popular in late Victorian times. Rogers’ plaster sculptures reflect ordinary scenes of the times in which he lived. They are reminiscent of, and have the same appeal as, the *Saturday Evening Post* magazine covers painted by Normal Rockwell in the first half of the last century. Two of the Rogers groups were donated by Mrs. S. Herbert (Harriet) Howe and her daughter, Mrs. Oscar H. (Charlotte) Stevens. The groups are *Neighboring Pews*, *Coming to the*



*Parson and We Boys*. It is not known which two were donated by these two ladies or who donated the third.

By far the most significant art belonging to the library are the *Old Homesteads of Marlborough* paintings displayed on the walls on the lower floor. These watercolor depictions of the homesteads of Marlborough were painted around the turn of the century by Ellen Maria Carpenter, a very popular landscape painter, who did not live to see the book, or her work on display. She died in 1908. As the story goes, when Ella Bigelow was writing her *Historical Reminiscences of the Town of Marlborough* for the 1910 celebration of Marlborough's 250th anniversary, she asked her friend, Ellen Carpenter, to paint pictures of the homesteads. She did, and they were printed in Ella's book as halftones. In the book it states that the collection of 124 paintings, were on display in the library during the 250th celebration, on loan from Mrs. Emily Bigelow Emery (later Mrs. Edward Ames), the daughter of Edward and Ella Bigelow. Emily felt that they should be hung permanently in the library and offered to sell them for \$500, a price far below their real value. However, even this price was beyond the library's means so, in 1911, both parties agreed that she would accept the interest from a donation made by Levi Bigelow which had been designated to be used for the purchase of books. Seventeen years later, in 1928, the final payment was made.

With the death of Edward L. Bigelow in 1915, the library lost its best friend. The previous year he had resigned from the Board of Trustees where he had served as chairman from the start.



*Winslow Morse Warren*

Another loss in 1915 was the death of **Winslow Morse Warren**. Winslow, a capitalist, was born and grew up in Marlborough where he worked on his father's farm, then became a partner in a meat and provision business. Later he was the sole proprietor of Dart & Co., an express firm, and had an insurance business. He was on the first board of directors of the People's National Bank. Ella Bigelow described him as "a generous hearted citizen whose gifts are frequent and unostentatiously bestowed." He donated the clock for the present City Hall building as well as \$1,000 towards the Carnegie Library, and had left a bequest of \$5,000 for the same.

**Sarah Elizabeth Cotting**, the daughter of a postmaster, was born in Marlborough and graduated from Marlborough High School. She had been assistant librarian for several years, and

when Lizzie died, she was appointed Librarian, a position which she held for thirty-six years until her own death in 1918. We were at war then, and in addition to her work at the library she also devoted any spare time to the Red Cross and whatever other work she could do to help the war effort. She had been told she was doing too much, but refused to quit, and eventually became so ill she had to leave the library position. She had hoped to return but she never recovered. Her obituary stated that few deaths in the city caused more genuine sorrow than Sarah's.

“Miss Cotting was a most progressive woman. By reading and study she kept abreast of all that was new and worth while in her chosen profession... and made it a point to know all of the best and latest in literature. She was of a retentive memory, wonderfully well informed, and never hesitated when called upon to assist those in search of needed information. In fact, she seemed to be a veritable encyclopedia of information. She was patient, courteous, faithful and cheerful, and at all times devoted to her work.”

Library assistant John P. McGee was appointed Librarian.

1918 was the year of the terrible influenza epidemic. It started in Boston and spread throughout the commonwealth. There is a notation in the Trustees Annual Report for that year that because of the epidemic, the library was closed for two weeks during the month of October.

In 1920, there was a newspaper article that stated U.S. Marshall John J. Mitchell was more pleased with his appointment as Library Trustee than his new office as Commissioner of Internal Revenue. John's first job had been in the Marlborough Public Library and he considered this appointment as the “greatest honor in his career.” He served six years on the board, and went on to become Massachusetts state representative and senator, and member of the U.S. Congress.

In 1924, two memorials were placed on the lawn between the Baptist Church and West Main St. The first was the Spanish War Veterans monument and the second was a tablet in memory of Lt. William Munroe Brigham who died in WWI.

The number of volumes in 1924 was 33,000.

1931- The Library was in the process of changing over to the Dewey Decimal System, and Eleanor Jones, future Children's Librarian, began her employment at the library.

In that same year **John Patrick McGee** died. John was born, raised and educated in Marlborough. He worked at the S.H. Howe shoe factory and spent some time in charge of circulation at the Marlboro Enterprise before becoming assistant librarian at the Marlborough Public Library. He had been appointed Librarian in 1918, serving in that position for 13 years, adding up to a total of 28 years devoted to the library.

According to his obituary: “Mr. McGee was one of the best known men in this city and a faithful servant of the people and the city. His kindly, and efficient, service at the Library, and his friendliness to all, marked him as an outstanding and lovable citizen. Mr. McGee was keenly interested in the Library work of the high school students and took special pains to give all the aid possible to their work there.”

Katherine E. Gorman, one of his assistants, succeeded him as librarian. It's interesting to note that both of his other assistants, Frances E. Cassily, and Bertha L. Shapiro would also, eventually, become Librarians.

1934 - A newspaper article written by trustee Frank W. Gurney stated that the Library, under the direction of Katherine Gorman had made every effort to make the institution indispensable to student, general reader, or seeker of special knowledge and a particular effort had been made to interest children in books and teach them how to use them.

## 1936 - THE UNVEILING

At the Public Library, on 26 August 1936, in celebration of Marlborough's Shoe Centennial, nearly one hundred people turned out to witness the unveiling of six, 20" x 24" photographs of Marlborough citizens who had made significant contributions to the erection of the library in 1904. They were Mayor Walter B. Morse, who pursued Andrew Carnegie for his \$30,000 contribution; John A. Frye and S. Herbert Howe who provided the land; and Hannah C. Swift, Michael Burke and Winslow M. Warren who each donated \$1,000. The unveiling was done by Michael Burke, the only living



*Michael Burke*

member of the group. (He died the following year.) The photographs were to be arrayed on either side of Andrew Carnegie whose photograph was already hanging in the east wing. Much later the photographs were taken down. The ones of Walter B. Morse and Hannah C. Swift were given to the Morse family and the other four were donated to the Marlborough Historical Society.

The plaque acknowledging Andrew Carnegie and the five citizens of Marlborough who made such substantial contributions in 1904 is still there, mounted on the west wall of the lobby near the West Main Street entrance.

**Michael Burke** was the son of Michael and Mary Burke who were among the first Irish immigrants to this city. He was educated

in Marlborough's schools, and worked for a short time in the shoe shops before entering the liquor business where he made his fortune. He built a beautiful mansion on Framingham Road and was involved in many of the city's projects including the city hall, the hospital and the library. The newspaper called him an "outstanding philanthropist." He built a park on Maple St., gave \$1,000 for the Carnegie Library and \$10,000 to the hospital. He was the New England Senior Golf Champion for several years and enjoyed tending his extensive apple orchard.

1947 - Eleanor Jones was named Children's Librarian.

The same year Librarian **Katherine (Gorman) McEnelly** tendered her resignation after many years of service. Katherine was born in Marlborough and lived here all her life. Her father was a druggist who had immigrated here from Ireland in 1853. She was assistant librarian for several years before becoming head librarian in 1931, upon the death of John McGee. She continued in this position until her marriage to Frank McEnelly in 1947. The annual report states that her leaving was a cause of regret for all the members of the library staff "as she endeavored in every way possible to make working under her guidance a pleasure. Her loyalty to the library and her staff of workers was unexcelled and the patrons, too, profited by her pleasing personality and earnest desire to serve all who patronize the library."

She was succeeded as Librarian by Frances E. Cassily.

**Frances Eunice Cassily**, the daughter of a Marlborough shoemaker, was born and schooled here and was a graduate of St. Ann's Academy. She joined the staff of

the Marlborough Public Library where she worked for more than thirty years, five of those as Librarian, retiring in 1952 when she married James P. Hyland. Her replacement as Librarian was Bertha L. Shapiro who stated that Frances was an excellent Librarian who would be remembered with affection by all who worked under her efficient administration.

1953 - A long cherished dream came true on 16 May 1953 when the new Children's Room, made possible by the very generous \$5,000 bequest of Mr. William P. Burdett, of Brookline, was officially dedicated. Mr. Burdett was the son of the late William D. Burdett, a local druggist, and member of the library's board of trustees for many years.



*Frances (Cassily) Hyland*

1955 - Another medical situation arose and the Children's Room was closed for a week. This time the culprit was polio. There was good news this same year when it was announced that the field trials of the Salk polio vaccine proved that it was safe and effective.

1964 - It was noted that for several years the board had been in communication with the mayor about the necessity for more space, and the fact that library needed to be expanded. This need was repeated again in 1965 and by 1966 the mayor had begun taking the steps necessary to access federal funds for improving the library facilities. City engineer John A. Bigelow, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, had already drawn up plans for an expansion of the library.

### **1967 - TRAGEDY STRIKES AGAIN**

Once again, just when things were moving forward for the betterment of the library, another disaster occurred. In July of 1967, an arsonist set fire to the building and several of the library rooms and their contents were ruined. The damage was estimated at \$30,000. Fortunately the Post Office had just moved into their new building on Florence St. leaving the old one on Mechanic St. vacant. In no time arrangements had been made by Mayor Frank Walker to set up the library there, temporarily. With the help of the DPW, the library staff moved and filed 18,000 books in a week's time and three weeks later the library was opened in its new quarters.

Sixteen of the Homestead paintings had been burned in the fire and the remainder sustained major smoke and water damage. Some of them were so blackened you could hardly discern the picture beneath the soot, so they were put in storage until a decision could be made about what to do with them..

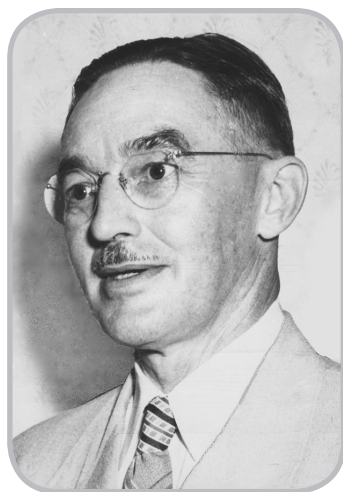
Progress continued on plans to rebuild and expand the library and nearly 100 people attended the ground-breaking ceremony held in November of 1968. Trustee



Chairman John Bigelow noted in his speech that, when finished, the library would be more than just a depository for books, but would also be a place where artistic and musical interests would be encouraged. The architect selected was the Boston firm of Kilham, Hopkins, Freeley, and Brodie, and the builder, A. Cibelli & Sons, of Marlborough.

Sadly, **John Arthur Bigelow**, who had been on the Board of Trustees of the Library since 1938 and played such a major role in its restoration and addition, did not live to see the final results of the time and effort he expended. He died February 9, 1970, at the age of 81.

John was a direct descendant of one of Marlborough's founding families and was considered to be "Marlborough's Historian." His whole life was spent searching and saving pieces of Marlborough's past. His death was a great loss to the entire city. The auditorium in the new wing of the library was named the John A. Bigelow Auditorium, in his honor.



*John Arthur Bigelow*



*The Marlborough DPW provides assistance in moving books after the disastrous fire of 1967.*

### **1970 - THE RENOVATED LIBRARY OPENS**

In early April of 1970, the temporary library closed for three weeks while the library staff, assisted by professional movers, transferred nearly 50,000 books, as well as periodicals and newspapers. The reading public came by the hundreds to see the newly renovated library when it re-opened on April 30. The formal dedication was held June 14, 1970.

In 1971, Bertha L. Shapiro, head librarian announced that through the influence of former Congressman, Phillip J. Philbin, the library had been designated as an

official Government Depository Library, one of only six in the state of Massachusetts. Depository libraries are permitted to receive one copy of all publications of the U.S. Government, except those required for official use only or for strictly administrative or operational purposes. Once designated as such it remains a depository until it ceases to exist or vacates the privilege at its own request.

In 1975, as a project for the Bicentennial, plans were made to restore the Homestead paintings so they could be put on display. Ann Howe Estabrook and Florence Brown Williams, members of both the Friends of the Library and the Marlborough Historical Society, were responsible for acquiring a grant from the Massachusetts Bicentennial Commission to have the paintings restored for the 1976 Bicentennial Celebration. This matching grant, combined with monies provided by the Marlborough Bicentennial Committee, the Board of Trustees, and the Friends of the Library, funded the restoration project. The two ladies mentioned above devoted untold hours of their time in their efforts to have this treasure restored and preserved. The collection became a rotating display of twenty-two pictures at a time and for many years they shared the task of changing the display. When they were no longer able to do it, a cross-section of the paintings were put on permanent display.

In September of 1975, Librarian **Bertha L. Shapiro** announced that she would be retiring on January 31, 1976, after 50 years of service to the library. The trustees accepted her resignation with “great, great regret.”



*Bertha L. Shapiro*

Bertha, born in Marlborough, was the daughter of Israel, a junk dealer, and Celia Shapiro. She attended Marlborough High School where her yearbook described her as being “always busy and always merry and doing her very best.” She won an honor in stenography, was involved in many extracurricular activities, and was an accomplished violinist. Fresh from high school she joined the library staff in 1923, and continued to serve in one capacity or another until she became Head Librarian in 1952. Under Bertha’s tenure the library grew tremendously and she was responsible for many of the innovations that were implemented. Trustee Chairman Edna Lepore stated that Bertha was “not one to sit back and let the library run itself.” She was involved in every aspect of it, giving generously of her time and talent, which was considerable. The citizens of Marlborough owe her a debt of gratitude

for her hard work and dedication.

1976 - Lillian Giuliano was named director of the library.

1979 - The Library received a check in the amount of \$11,587.59, a bequest from the estate of Ruth Tayntor. That same year a letter written by a patron to Lillian Giuliano stated: “The selection of titles is comprehensive... information on a vast array of subjects... the staff is cooperative, pleasant and helpful... she is doing a fantastic job as director... the Library is a place where the public can find knowledge, information and pleasure in a wonderfully warm atmosphere.”

1982 - **Eleanor Jones** retired from the library after 51 years of service.

Eleanor was born in Clinton in 1912, but was raised and spent the rest of her life here in Marlborough. She was the daughter of William H. Jones, an osteopath, and Cora (Dudley) Jones. Eleanor graduated from Marlborough High School and took two years of business school before going to work at the library in 1931. She was a quiet person who loved children and took great pleasure in introducing them to reading. She was appointed Children's Librarian in 1947 and spent 35 of her 51 years there entertaining and reading to three generations of children. She could remember their names and had a way about her that made them feel safe.



*Eleanor Jones*

Mary Lou Audette took over as Children's Librarian and during her tenure established a Parents' Council which provided support for the Children's Room.

1983 - The library had become computerized and the staff was taking computer courses.

1985 - The Periodicals Room was named the Edna Lepore Reading Room. Edna, who died in 1984, had been a Board Trustee and Chairman for many years.

1990 - The library joined the CW/Mars resource sharing system. Prior to that it had been in the eastern division since the 1960s.

1996 - A handicapped elevator was installed so that physically challenged citizens would have access to the Bigelow Auditorium and the Children's Library on the lower floor.



*Lillian Giuliano*

On the lawn, outside the doors of the Children's Library, a whimsical sculpture garden was created, in memory of Eleanor Jones. The garden features four bronze statues of a tortoise, hare, frog and various toadstools, all the wonderful work of David Kapetanopoulos who was also the sculptor for the Shoemaker's Monument on Granger Blvd. The garden was dedicated during a tribute to **Lillian Giuliano** who was retiring after serving as director for twenty years. Lillian had wanted to be a librarian since she was a young girl and there was high praise for her leadership in bringing the library into the technological age.

Karen Tobin was appointed interim director.

1997 - In December, Ann Robinson took over as Director.

## AN HISTORICAL HAPPENING



*Old Williams Tavern*

1999 - This was the year of “An Historical Happening,” the odyssey of two collections: the Old Homesteads of Marlborough and the C. John Minnucci Posters. This event was sponsored by the library’s Board of Trustees and the Friends of the Library in celebration of National Library Week. The lower lobbies and the auditorium had fresh paint and new lighting, and for the first time in its 89 year history the entire Homestead Collection was on permanent display in the lobbies. This collection, depicting the homes of the citizens of Marlborough as it entered the 20th century, is unique and invaluable. The C. John Minnucci Poster Collection adds a warm and friendly atmosphere to the Bigelow Auditorium and serves as an historical record of the wide array of cultural programs sponsored by The Friends in the 1970s. Both collections were framed and updated to the latest archival standards by the Post Road Art Center in Marlborough.

2001 - **Ann Robinson** left Marlborough for a position as assistant director of the Worcester Public Library and Karen Tobin once again became acting/interim Director. Ann had been described as a “dynamite fund-raiser,” a “go-getter,” and “someone who immediately became part of the family.”

In November Elizabeth (Betsey) Marcus Wolfe was appointed Director.

In December, as part of a *Food for Fines* program whereby fines would be waived for any patrons returning overdue books, as long as they donated money or food to the Food Pantry, an elderly gentleman returned a book which had been overdue since March 1, 1950! The book, printed in 1949, was about the New York Yankees, and the gentleman apologized for keeping it so long.

2004 – A Rodgers & Hammerstein concert and a cake marked the end of the year long celebration of the library’s 100th year as a Carnegie Library. The grand finale was the reading of the congratulatory letter personally signed by Laura Bush, the wife of the President of the United States.

2006 - **Betsey Wolfe** who had been Director of the library for five years, left for a new position elsewhere. Trustee chairman, Daniel Verrico, had described her as an “outstanding library director, an extraordinary professional and a joy to work with.”

2007 - M.J. Campbell was interim director from December 2006 until July 2007 when Salvatore Genovese, the library’s current director was chosen.



2010 – **Salvatore Genovese** has done a wonderful job since he was appointed three years ago. He is friendly, energetic, helpful and full of ideas for improving the library and making it more user-friendly. Many of his ideas have already been implemented. We sincerely hope that his tenure is a long one.

There are 115,819 volumes on the shelves of the Marlborough Public Library.

### THE FRIENDS OF THE MARLBOROUGH PUBLIC LIBRARY

Trustee Margaret Hayes and Library Director Bertha Shapiro were instrumental in forming this organization which had its beginning in February of 1970 at the old Marlborough Post Office on Mechanic Street. The first officers were: Dr. William Castelli, President; Raymond A. Johnson, Vice-President; Theodore Williams, Treasurer; and Shirley Richards, Secretary. Dr. Castelli served as President for two years at which time Raymond Johnson was elected to that position and still holds it to this day.

Their mission statement is to stimulate the interest of the community in the services and needs of the library, to enrich the cultural life of the community, and to promote a program of assistance through volunteer help and fundraising that will enable the library to keep pace with the growth of the City.

From an initial group of fifty or sixty people they have grown over the years and today number in the hundreds. During the forty years of their existence, the Friends, under the leadership of Ray Johnson, have more than lived up to their mission statement. They have made music, art, culture, entertainment, and education

available to all of Marlborough's citizens with the programs they have sponsored. They have also been a dependable source of financial support for the Library.

In June of 1983, Mayor Joseph Ferrecchia bestowed the Honor upon Ray of naming the auditorium in the Walker Building (the old high school) on Main Street, as the Johnson Auditorium, in recognition of his volunteer work enriching the cultural life of Marlborough through his work with The Friends of the Marlborough Public Library and other civic organizations.

We cannot emphasize enough the roll that this organization has played in the life of the Library. The *Friends of the Marlborough Public Library* are eminently deserving of our praise and gratitude.



*Raymond A. Johnson*

It should be made clear that the persons mentioned in this booklet are only a small sampling of the multitude of people, who, over the past generations, have contributed as much or more to the success of the Marlborough Public Library, as those acknowledged here. It is impossible to list, or even to know them all, but our gratitude goes out to them, as well, and is just as heartfelt.

## HEAD LIBRARIANS/DIRECTORS

LIBRARIAN/DIRECTOR	TERM IN OFFICE
Lizzie S. Wright	1870-1882
Sarah E. Cotting	1882-1918
John P. McGee	1918-1931
Katherine Gorman	1931-1947
Frances Cassily	1947-1952
Bertha L. Shapiro	1952-1976
Lillian Giuliano	1976-1996
Karen M. Tobin (interim)	1996- Dec. 1997
Ann A. Robinson	Dec. 1997-2001
Karen M. Tobin (acting)	Mar.-Nov.2001
Elizabeth Marcus Wolfe	Nov. 2001-Dec. 2006
M. J. Campbell (interim)	Dec. 2006-Jul. 2007
Salvatore Genovese	2007- present

## LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

1870	2010
Rev. Simon T. Aldrich	Nena Bloomquist, Secretary
Edward L. Bigelow, Chairman	Bill Brewin
Bernard Brewin	Raymond Hale
John O'Connell	Raymond Johnson
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Frank A. Howe	Janice Merk
Samuel Howe	Jean Peters
Nahum Witherbee	Robyn Ripley

## FRIENDS OF THE MARLBOROUGH PUBLIC LIBRARY

1970	2010
Castelli, Dr. William, President	Raymond A. Johnson, President
Raymond A. Johnson, Vice-president	Teresa Stefanski, Vice-president
Theodore Williams, Treasurer	Tony Arruda, Treasurer
Shirley Richards, Secretary	Mary E. Rowe, Secretary



## MARLBOROUGH PUBLIC LIBRARY

35 West Main Street  
Marlborough, MA 01752  
508-624-6900

Salvatore Genovese, Director

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Susan Laufer, Chairperson  
Rustin Kyle, Vice Chairperson  
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William F. Brewin, Jr.  
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Jean Peters  
Robyn Ripley

### MARLBOROUGH PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATION

Janice Merk, President  
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Nena Bloomquist  
William F. Brewin, Jr.  
Raymond A. Johnson  
Rustin Kyle  
Susan Laufer  
Jean Peters  
Robyn Ripley

### *The Friends of the Marlborough Public Library*

#### OFFICERS

Raymond A. Johnson,\* President  
Teresa Stefanski,\* Vice President  
Mary E. Rowe,\* Secretary  
Anthony Arruda,\* Treasurer

#### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE\*

Leslie Havens, Music Chair  
Nancy Bailey, Art Chair  
Gene Hartnett, Membership Chair  
Patricia Lampe, Book Sale Chair  
Helen Barsamian, Historian  
C. John Minnucci, Paternoster Opera  
Trust Fund



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# My Library

by Varda One

It's only a room with shelves and books,  
but it's far more magical than it looks.  
It's a jet on which I soar  
to lands that exist no more.  
Or a key with which I find  
answers to questions crowding my mind.  
Building my habit of learning and growing,  
asking and researching till I reach knowing.  
Here, I've been a mermaid and an elf.  
I've even learned to be more myself.  
I think that I shall never see  
a place that's been more useful to me.  
With encouraging kind friends with wit  
who tell me to dream big and never quit.  
It's only a room with shelves and books,  
but it's far more magical than it looks.