

THE GIFT OF ACTON MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Narrator: In March 1889, Acton native and successful Boston businessman William Wilde wrote to long time acquaintance Luther Conant:

William Wilde:

Friend Conant

For fear that I might not have made myself fully understood in what I said to you yesterday, allow me to say that so far as in my power I desire that Acton's Memorial Library shall be dedicated to two noble objects: the memory of Acton's patriotic citizens, who at their country's call, left home and family ties and on many a hard fought battle field made a united country once more possible.

To me it is a sad sight to the ranks of these brave men so rapidly passing away, and the whitening locks of those now remaining remind us that they too cannot long remain with us. While they do, let us show them all honor and gratitude for they richly deserve it of us.

In this building now being erected the largest and best room should be theirs and I would have a marble tablet on which their names should be handed down to their children and children's children as a perpetual memorial for all coming time.

This building and all it contains is to belong to Acton and I have no desire other than what my native town desires, therefore I wish she would indicate what names shall be placed on this roll of honor, as also upon that other, smaller but sadder tablet, the names of her honored dead who freely gave their lives in their country's service.

The second object of this Memorial Library, as I have it in my mind, is to give to every man, woman and child in Acton a library of good, pure, interesting and instructive reading, so to mould the minds of all, especially those of the young that the whole people shall be elevated socially, morally, and religiously by its silent but beneficent influences.

You are at liberty to use this letter or any part of it as you may think best, and any assistance you may be able to give me in this undertaking will be thankfully received and gladly reciprocated.

Yours Truly,

W. A. Wilde

Narrator: In addition to giving the library building and an opening day collection of 4000 books to the Town, William Wilde gave \$5000 to support future book purchases and left the library another \$4000 in his will. Proceeds from these bequests are still used to buy library materials.

Clara Hapgood Nash knew first-hand the price paid by so many to save the Union, for she lost her brother Henry to the war. At the library's dedication on May 24, 1890, she read a poem she had composed for the occasion.

This is an excerpt from her work.

Clar Hapgood Nash:

Who are these dead? They are the loyal dead,
Who in the late Rebellion freely bled.
The nation's prime, o'erwhelmed by darkest gloom,
'Neath clouds of civil conflict met their doom;
Young husband, father, weeping mother's boy,

Friend, lover, sister's pride, and father's joy;
These bravely falling, where the old flag waved,
Redeemed a race, –the grand old Union saved.
Some still survive; some, who through shot and shell
Closed up the ranks, when bleeding comrades fell,
To self oblivious, serving but one thought,–
On! On! To victory, though it be blood-bought.