

A History
of the
Acton Memorial Library



1890—1990

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF LIBRARIES

The earliest known Library is a collection of clay tablets dating from 2100 B.C. in Babylonia. Papyrus Libraries existed about 1200 B.C. in Egypt and a public Library was established 330 B.C. in Greece. The Romans spread Libraries from Greece to the far reaches of their empire. Many early Christian Libraries were collected in monasteries, the oldest being the Vatican Library, begun in 1475 A.D. with over 2,500 volumes.

From the founding of the first Library in Boston in 1653 until the late 19th century, practically all Libraries in the United States were funded by private subscription. In Acton, the Center Library was established by subscription in the early 1800s, and was located in the Fletcher shoe store until that building burned in 1862. What remained of the Library was then transferred to the general store of Moses Emory Taylor on Main Street. This was not, however, the first Library in Acton. Old manuscripts reveal that in 1801 a Social Library existed with a list of subscribers and officers that included many Acton veterans of the Revolutionary War. Records show that fines were charged at 3 cents per day for overdue books and Capt. Joseph Brown was fined 4 cents for soiling pages 194, 196 of *Pilgrim's Progress*. The Citizens Library of West Acton was another such Library, begun in 1883 with 68 subscribers contributing \$1 to \$50 each. A *Gazetteer of Massachusetts* published in 1889 says of Acton "There are, in the town, five libraries, aggregating about 3,000 volumes. Two of

these, having about 2,000 volumes, are association libraries; the others belong to Sunday schools."

Free public Libraries in the U.S. came into being in the 1830s, beginning with Peterborough, New Hampshire in 1833. In 1837, Massachusetts enacted legislation to establish district-school Libraries, but it was not implemented successfully and was superseded in 1851 by an act which allowed communities to receive or to establish and support public Libraries. Wayland had established a free public Library in 1850, and the act was an attempt to pass a general law to allow the practice. The Boston Public Library was established by a special act in 1848.

By 1856, 175 of the 351 towns and cities in Massachusetts had free public Libraries. In 1890, when the Free Public Library Commission (now the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners) was created "to promote the establishment and efficiency of free public Libraries" the number had risen to 248, and by 1904 almost every town in Massachusetts had a free public Library. Today there are 377 public Libraries, with some towns (as does Acton) having more than one.

In the 1880s many of America's successful businessmen developed social consciences. Andrew Carnegie, who gave some \$65 million to U. S. Libraries, set forth the idea that successful men were Trustees of their wealth and should use it for the public good. One of the people who shared this sentiment was William A. Wilde.

WILLIAM ALLAN WILDE

William Allan Wilde was born on July 11, 1827 in South East Acton at the family farm at Parker Street and Independence Road. His parents were Joseph Wilde, descended from settlers in Braintree in 1632, and Sarah Conant Wilde of Stow, an 8th generation descendent of Roger Conant. Educated at Groton and Pepperell academies, William Wilde taught school for some dozen years. In the winter term of 1860 to 1861 he taught at the South East School in Acton, where the school report of that year notes that he had been "in the profession for many years."

He entered the publishing business and assumed control of the New England business of Ivison, Blakeman, Taylor & Co. of New York. In 1865 he established the publishing house of W. A. Wilde & Co. with offices at 25 Bromfield St. in Boston, and in Chicago, with agents in London and



William A. Wilde

Melbourne. Among the items published were the Sunday School Quarterlies, used almost universally by New England Congregational churches at that time.

Some of Wilde's many civic contributions included serving as Malden Superintendent of Schools 1873-4, as Chairman of Malden Water Commission for several years, as a Trustee of the Malden Hospital and of the Malden Public Library. He was chairman of the State Board of Prison Commissioners from 1889 to 1891, and was a State Legislator for two years during which time he served as Chairman of the Committee on Education. He was chairman of the standing committee of his church, the First Congregational of Malden. Furthermore he was a member of

the Converse Lodge of the Knights of Honor and an honorary member of the Hiram G. Berry Post 40 of the Grand Army of the Republic.

In 1889 he had turned his thoughts to his native town. He approached several of his friends and former townsmen about a suitable memorial to Acton's Civil War dead and to the dwindling numbers of Civil War veterans. In time he decided the building of a Library would be the best memorial. As he wrote to Luther Conant on March 29, 1889:

"I desire that Acton's Memorial Library shall be dedicated to two noble objects, viz. to 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 see the ranks of these brave men so rapidly passing away, 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 name 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 benificent [sic] influences."

In grateful anticipation of this contribution, the Reverend James Fletcher wrote in the Town Report of 1889 "The Memorial Library building which our generous benefactor, William A. Wilde, is rearing, is to be a permanent symbol of the union between Letters and Liberty."

On his sudden death on December 2, 1902 he left his widow (third wife) and three children: William E. of Winchester (b. Acton 1858), Allan H. of Malden (b. 1874), and Alice (Mrs. Wylie C. Burnes of Malden) (b. 1869). Wilde's obituary stated that he was a "great friend of the poor and gave with a lavish hand." A world traveler, having crossed the ocean eleven times, he was, at the time of his death, making arrangements to winter in Germany and Switzerland.

ACTON IN THE CIVIL WAR

The Davis Guards, named for the Captain of Minutemen who fell at North Bridge in Concord on April 19th, 1775, were originally formed as a marching unit to represent Acton in the Concord parade on the 75th anniversary of that battle. Having mastered the art of parading and full of the spirit of their Colonial forebears, they applied the following year to join the Massachusetts Volunteer Militia and were commissioned as Company E of the 6th Regiment.

Ten years later, with clouds of war threatening the horizon, their training and drill took on a more serious aspect when Governor Andrew ordered that the militia companies "be forthwith put into a state of efficiency." On April 15th, three days after the surrender of Fort Sumter, President Lincoln issued a proclamation calling for 75,000 troops to defend the Capitol from the secessionists. Senator Wilson telegraphed the news to Governor Andrew that afternoon and an order was issued to activate the militia. Colonel Jones of the 6th Mass., who happened to have been in Boston at the time, caught the 4 o'clock train to South Acton where he met Captain A. C. Handley at the station and told him to round up the men and report to him in Lowell by 7 o'clock the next morning. Bells were rung and messengers sent, assembling the Company at the Town Hall from whence they departed by wagon at 2 a.m., thus entering history as the first volunteers in all the Union to answer the call.

From Lowell they went to Boston where they were issued uniform greatcoats and, after spending the night in Fanueil Hall, they marched down Washington Street to the cheers of a frenzied crowd and entrained for Washington. In those days there was no direct rail line through Baltimore and the troops had to be transported through the city in horse drawn cars between stations. The Davis Guards were in the lead and got safely through, but the secessionist mob rioted, shots were fired, and on that day, April 19th, 86 years after the battle of Lexington and Concord,

fell the first casualties of the Civil War. Coincidentally, the first civilian killed was a Mr. Davis.

Arriving in Washington, the 6th was quartered in the Senate Chamber where the men of Acton took special delight in sitting on the desk of Senator Jefferson Davis. For several days, they were the only troops to arrive and Lincoln came to greet them and shake their hands, declaring fretfully "I don't believe there is a 7th, and where is Rhode Island?" Later they were posted to Relay Station, Maryland where they guarded a railway junction and aqueduct. At the the end of their 3-month call-up, they returned to Acton on August 10th without seeing further action. A portion of a poem, dedicated to the 6th by J. W. Forney in 1861, reads:

Next come the Massachusetts men,
Gathered from city, glade, and glen.
No hate for South, but love for all
They answered to their country's call.
The path to them seemed broad and bright,
They sought no foeman and no fight,
As on they marched, their flag before
New England's braves, through Baltimore.

Most of the Davis Guards re-enlisted in other regiments, and along with other volunteers from Acton, saw action in several battles. One such was Corp. Nathaniel M. Allen, Company B, 1st Massachusetts Infantry, who earned a Medal of Honor at Gettysburg on July 2nd, 1863. The citation, issued in 1899, one year before his death, states "When his regiment was falling back, this soldier, bearing the national color, returned in the face of the enemy's fire, pulled the regimental flag from under the body of its bearer, who had fallen, saved the flag from capture and brought both colors off the field." The youngest recruit from Acton was Thomas Kinsley, Jr., aged but 15 years and two months on his enlistment in February, 1864, he died in Washington nine months later. The Navy is represented among the fallen by Seaman Luke Robbins, killed in action aboard the *Seminole* at Galveston in May of 1865.

The last of the Davis Guards to die was Aaron James Fletcher in 1938. He marched through Baltimore on April 19th, 1861, and later served in the medical corps at New Orleans where several Acton men died of fever. On April 28th, 1990, the anniversary of Fletcher's birth, the Library made a major accession to its collection of Civil War artifacts when it accepted from his grandson, Leonard Adams, the gift of many precious items;

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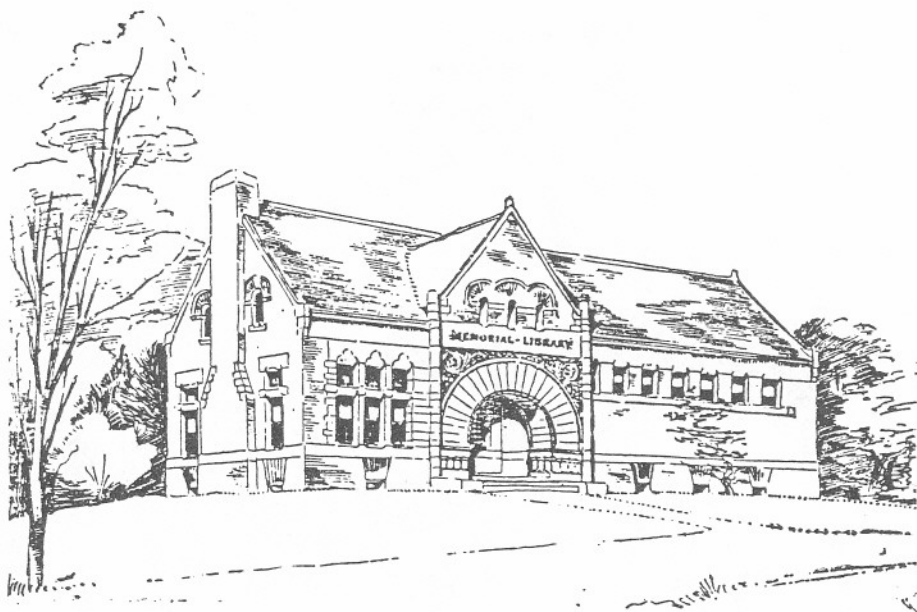


Veterans of Isaac Davis Post, Grand Army of the Republic, in 1924

including his musket, bible, canteens, haversack, medical kit, letters case, medals, photographs and G.A.R. memorabilia.

THE ORIGINAL BUILDING

The Memorial Library sits on land owned for some sixty years previous by the Fletcher family, of whom the Reverend James Fletcher (author of *Acton in History*) was one of the original elected Trustees and, in 1893, was the first of the Trustees to die. Moses Taylor (an original corporate Trustee) removed the Fletcher house and barn to their present location on Nagog Hill Road.



Original building designed by architects William Richardson and H. W. Hartwell

Of Romanesque architectural style, the red brick and brownstone building was designed by architects H. W. Hartwell and William G. Richardson of Boston. Charles H. Dodge, a Groton native with a good reputation as a master builder in Boston, built the Library for a cost of \$30,000. The entrance to the 66'x33' building was through a freestone arch which sheltered two massive slate memorial tablets—one inscribed with the names of the 29 Acton men who died in the Civil War, the other with the names of 124 who served and survived.

On entering, the reading room (Memorial Room) was on the left, containing a brownstone tablet above the fireplace inscribed "This Building a Gift to His Native Town by William A. Wilde." On the right of the entry was the book room with book alcoves two stories high. Straight ahead was the Trustees' room, a vault and toilet facilities. Water was provided from an existing 75' deep well. Water was pumped to a tank which is still in the attic. Until they were replaced in 1936, two furnaces in the spacious basement used about 6-7 tons of coal annually. Originally the



Original Interior, Looking from the Book Room towards the Reading Room

Library was gaslit; electric lighting being first provided by the American Woolen Company in 1902, followed by Edison Electric in 1930.

Over time, only slight modifications were made to the interior; such as expanded bookshelves, modification and cleanup of the attic, relocation of the Librarian's desk, and creation of a children's room.

THE DEDICATION CEREMONY

Dedication of the Library building was made on May 24, 1890, though it was not opened to the public until June 14th. Governor John Q. A. Brackett, and other honored guests, arrived on the noon train. After a collation at the Town Hall, a procession went to the Library to dedicate the two memorial tablets. The procession then retired to a tent set up

near the monument, where exercises were opened with vocal selections by the Adelphi Quartette, followed by an invocation, and a welcoming speech by Mr. F. C. Nash, President of the Day.

Mr. Wilde, accompanied by his wife and daughter Alice, then presented the building to the Town. Three cheers followed, and bouquets of flowers were presented to the Wildes. The Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, Howard B. White (later to be elected Trustee), transferred the building to the Trustees of the Library. A speech followed by the Hon. John D. Long (paid \$20 for his efforts) lauding Mr. Wilde for the gift. Clara Hapgood Nash (Librarian of the West Acton Citizens' Library) then read a poem she had written for the occasion, and Governor Brackett gave an address. Other speakers followed and the ceremony was concluded.

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Act of Incorporation, approved by the Legislature on February 27th 1890, stated that nine Trustees; six appointed for life as Corporate members and three to be elected by the Town to 3-year terms, "shall constitute the Trustees of said corporation, and shall have the entire management, control, and direction of its affairs." All of the Trustees had to be residents of Acton. The original Corporators were as follows: Luther Conant, President, Adelbert Mead, Moses Taylor, Delette H. Hall, Hiram J. Hapgood, and Daniel J. Wetherbee. The first elected Trustees were Howard B. White, William D. Tuttle, and the Reverend James Fletcher.

Trustee terms tend to be long, but the record of forty years is held by Lucius A. Hesselton who was elected a Trustee in 1891 and remained on the board until his death in 1931. The Trustees' Report of 1924 shows him still to be an elected Trustee. Of the current Trustees, Raymond A. Shamel is the longest serving, having been appointed a corporate Trustee in 1963. Second is Brewster Conant, descendant of an original corporator, who has been a corporate Trustee since 1969.

The first woman Trustee, Caroline Brown (notable as a survivor of the Titanic sinking in 1912 and a member of the Boston publishing family of Little, Brown & Co.) was elected in 1919 to fill the vacancy of Moses Taylor, who had died in 1915. She served until her death in 1928, to be succeeded by her son Murray Brown.

In the Town Report for 1932, E. Faulkner Conant, Secretary of the Board, gives a detailed account of the Trustees terms up to that time. Hayward S. Houghton, longtime Trustee, also charted the terms of Trustees from 1947 to 1984, but for information on the years 1932-1946 one must look to the bound reports of the Trustees, the Town Reports for that period listing only the elected members.

BOOK SELECTION AND ACQUISITION

Donors of books were listed in the Town Reports with thanks for the number of books given, a practice which continued until 1956. From 1912 to 1947 the Town Report also listed the titles and author of each book added to the collection. In those days, the Trustees took particular interest in the collection, and in 1891 voted to notify an author that his donation of *Echoes of Dreamland* [whatever they were] was not wanted. Someone else, in 1911, wished to donate some books on socialism. These were refused, as Luther Conant put it, because the Trustees would have nothing to do with a system under which "the earnings and savings of the industrious and prudent are to be shared by the spendthrift and idle."

With availability of storage and the security of the new vault, artifacts and curiosities began to accumulate. The Town deposited its relics (the communion service, pewter tankards and platters) and several individuals, over the years, donated swords, muskets, pistols and articles of clothing and uniform from the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 and the Civil War. Such donations were noted over the years in the Annual Report of the Trustees or in the Librarian's reports. Phalen's *History of the Town of Acton* goes into some detail about the collection, noting that a full description was beyond the scope of even that book. Arthur Davis' 1935 history of the Library also attempted to catalog the donations.

THE WILDE MEMORIAL FUND AND OTHER GIFTS

In 1890, the Town had voted a sum of \$400 for maintenance of the Library, a figure that was not to change until 1914, plus \$100 for books. It soon became apparent that the book budget was inadequate. Mr. Wilde contributed sums of \$100 in 1891 and \$150 in 1892 to help out, but it was not until 1896 that the situation was resolved when Mr. Wilde agreed to give \$5,000 as an endowment (The Wilde Memorial Fund) provided that the Town appropriated \$200 for books annually. Town Meeting

approved and until 1946, \$200 was so voted each year. A further \$4,000 was bequeathed at the death of Mrs. Wilde in 1925.

Other amounts followed over the years, the first being a gift of a \$1,000 4% West Shore Railroad Bond, given by Luther Conant in 1904 in memory of his recently deceased wife. It was to mature in 2351, 457 years later, showing, if not faith in the New York Central Railroads, faith in America. Interest was paid throughout the depression.

Gifts from Luke Tuttle (1915) and Hiram Hapgood (1918) followed. Of special interest is the gift, in 1955, of \$13,000 from the estate of Nelson B. Taintor who had married a girl from Acton. This fund is particularly valued as it is the largest that is not restricted to the purchase of books.

Over the years the Wilde Memorial Fund (known since 1964 as the Acton Memorial Library Fund) has been drawn upon regularly so that today's balance of approximately \$35,000 is much the same as it was in 1955. This fund is presently managed by Franklin Management Corporation of Boston and is combined with Cemetery and certain other Town funds.

IDA A. HALE, 1890-97

Ida A. Hale, the first Librarian, presided over and cataloged the initial collection of 3,973 books, almost all of which were donated by Mr. and Mrs. Wilde. By 1892, some 703 Library cards had been issued to a Town population of about 1,900 persons and by 1898 some 1,300 cards had been issued. Remarkably, circulation in 1891 was 9,937 volumes, a figure not exceeded until 1919. Library fines in the amount of \$12.67 were collected in the first year of operation. Ida Hale married Lyman Tuttle in 1894, and retired in 1897.

VIOLA TUTTLE, 1897-1902

Early in Viola Tuttle's term, a catalog of books was published to be available to the public for 25 cents each. Until then only the Librarian's catalog and posted sheets containing new additions to the collection were available. Unfortunately, of the 600 printed only a few were sold, the Library not having the wisdom of a Free Public Library Commissioner who, in 1891 noted that "Sometimes a year's income, or a sum that would give from 500 to 1,000 volumes to a Library, is wasted upon the printing and binding of a catalog which people are expected to purchase at cost but which experience proves must be given away, or three-fourths of the

edition will remain stored in some corner soon to become superannuated and about as useful as the same weight of last year's almanacs."

The Town Report for 1902 informs us that, in May of that year, Viola Tuttle "who performed the duties of that office in a very acceptable manner, resigned by reason of overwork and impaired health."

ARTHUR FULLER DAVIS, 1902-1945

Arthur F. Davis may be better known for his many fine paintings and etchings of local scenes than for his tenure of 43 years as Librarian. Interestingly, in 1924, he became a corporate Trustee as well, and served as such until his death in 1953. He also served as janitor from 1920-37, and was paid extra for that and for additional duties such as cataloging.

During this time, Davis made improvements in the shelving for books and in the vault. The Dewey Decimal System, developed by Melvil Dewey in 1876, was adopted by the Library in 1913. Before that, the system was based on that of the Boston Public Library. From the original collection of 3,973 volumes, the total number of books grew steadily to about 20,000 in 1934, where it stayed until the new addition was built in 1967.

From time to time the State would check up on the Library. The Trustees' Report of 1913 records that the Free Public Library Commission (now the Mass. Board of Library Commissioners) noted the Memorial Library's low circulation compared with other towns. The Trustees reacted by voting to allow patrons to take out two books at a time instead of just one as before. By way of explanation, they noted a "competitor with large circulation" (the Citizens' Library) and that high school pupils, who went to school in Concord at the time, used the Concord Library.

Branch Libraries had been operated from very early on as witnessed by an item in the Library accounts, usually about \$50 annually, for transporting books. The 1912 report mentions that books were received and delivered each Saturday at the stores of C.H. Mead & Co., and Finney and Hoyt. In 1938 the Citizens' Library of West Acton became affiliated with the Memorial Library and acted as a distribution point for books until 1962.

Library reports of 1907 and 1908 suggest that Davis' tenure was not always peaceful. Cited are "rude boys and visitors who abuse the privilege of the book room, [which] annoys and delays the work of the Librarian."

MARY LOTHROP, 1945-1955

In 1945, Miss Mary Lothrop was made Librarian and served in that capacity until shortly before her death in 1955. In those days, the Library was open two days a week: Wednesday and Saturday afternoons and evenings, and books could not be reserved. Again in 1947, the State's rating of the Library was very low.

In 1951 these hours were increased to three days a week, and in 1955 to five days a week, but it was not until 1968 that the Library was open in the mornings. The total number of days the Library was open was recorded in the Town Report until 1954.

Miss Lothrop's 1952 report declares the Library to be "badly in need of space." Circulation was increasing—from the 20,000 volume post-war level to 35,000 by 1956. Branches continued to be operated in West and South Acton and circulation of paperbacks was begun to save space and conserve monies for hard cover books.

MARIAN PIPER, 1955-1967

Marian Piper became Librarian in 1955, and the Library began opening weekdays except Mondays, and on Saturdays. In 1955 a children's room was established, but a full time Children's Librarian, Edna Custance, was not added to the staff until 1965. A long range plan for expansion of the Library was begun in 1961, and the Friends of the Acton Libraries, formed in 1962, became instrumental in making the townspeople aware of the need for expansion. They continue to be a valued and important organization for all Town and school Libraries, supplying many hours of volunteer help as well as funds for specific projects from monies raised through book and bake sales.

The Citizens' Library of West Acton, after an association with the Memorial Library since 1938, began its first year as a separate Town Library in 1962 with a collection of 5,212 volumes and a circulation of 4,600 books. Mrs. Thelma Hermes was Librarian.

A new addition, designed by architect Joseph Schiffer of Concord, was proposed by the Trustees in 1964, and in June of that year a Special Town Meeting voted to transfer the Highway Department land behind the Library to the Trustees. By a vote of 335 to 102 the Town authorized the Building Committee to enter into construction contracts and appropriated \$210,000, the bulk of which was borrowed, to be repaid over 8 years.

Bids for the new addition were opened in October 1965 and construction begun on the 8,241 square foot building. Dedication was made on May 21, 1967, the Rev. Roger Wootton giving the invocation, followed by a welcoming address by Raymond A. Shamel, Chairman of the Building Committee. Mrs. Piper introduced the Library staff, and Architect Shiffer commented on features of the building. Trustee Earle Tuttle then introduced the main speaker, Mrs. V. Genevieve Galick, Director of the Massachusetts Bureau of Library Extension Service. Gifts to the Library were presented by the Friends of the Acton Libraries, the Acton Junior Chamber of Commerce, The Church of the Good Shepherd and the West Acton Woman's Club.

WANDA NULL, 1967-

Marian Piper retired with due ceremonies on October 29, 1967 and was succeeded by Mrs. Wanda Null, who assumed directorship of a rapidly growing and changing Library. In the first few years, Mrs. Null introduced many new services and collections to the Library, including large-print books, art exhibits, recordings and tapes, microfilms, framed prints, college catalogs and film series. The demand for services continued to increase and in the early 1970s the Library hired a reference librarian and an assistant, a cataloguer, and a children's librarian. In 1973, Assistant Library Director, Mrs. Carole Chisvin was hired.

In response to citizen's requests, and with the establishment of an active volunteer program which made it possible, the Library added morning hours in 1968. Sunday hours were added in 1974. Despite continued volunteer support, the budget limitations imposed by Proposition 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ in 1981 resulted in the elimination of Friday evenings and the curtailment of Sunday hours. The budget for the current year has eliminated Sundays completely and reduced the weekday morning hours.

The card catalog was revised in 1970, with the first complete inventory of the collection. The Town's pewter relics were placed on permanent loan to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 1974. The addition of a Library membership in the M.F.A. that same year continues to allow patrons free admission to view these and other priceless works of art. The Library's own collection of artworks is enhanced by several paintings by Arthur Davis. In addition, the Library has located and documented over 200 works by Davis that are in private hands.

The original building, which had been used for storage since the addition was built, was reopened in 1968 to provide an adult reading room, and in 1970 a reference area was added. In 1977 these were moved to the new addition and the original building was given over to use as a children's Library. A wheelchair ramp, installed in 1979 made the Library building accessible, and in 1982, major improvements were made to the new wing when the ceiling was lowered and fluorescent lighting installed. Further accessibility improvements were made with the installation of a Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD) in 1986 and a low-vision reader video-enlargement system in 1988.

Video cassettes and compact discs were added to the collection in 1987 and the following year the Library joined the Minuteman Library network, giving Acton patrons access to over 600,000 volumes in 26 area Libraries. Barcoding of the collection began in 1988 and the catalog was completely online with the Minuteman network by October of 1989. We've come a long way since 1890 when the books were doled out one at a time from behind the grillework of the librarian's desk. One hundred years later, patrons search an almost limitless computer database and the *kerchunk kerchunk* of the Gaylord machine on the circulation desk has been replaced by the red flash of a laser.

THE FUTURE OF THE LIBRARY

A long range plan, looking to the needs of the next 20 years, has been developed. It concludes that the Library building has once again become too small for the needs of its patrons. The Town has voted funds which would provide a share of the money needed for expansion, but the State funding that was to provide 75% of the cost will not be forthcoming soon. The long term goal is to enclose the patio at the rear of the building. This would provide a 50% increase in book shelf space, additional office space, and space for patron seating.

As we observe the Centennial Celebrations our thanks must go to all those who have contributed over the years to make the Acton Memorial Library all that its donor, William Allan Wilde, would have wished. With the advent of our second century, the Trustees and staff hope that we can continue to realize the goals of the original Trustees as expressed by Luther Conant in the Town Report of 1893.

Thus, briefly, have we reviewed the work of and the accessions to the Library for the year. We think that we are warranted in the belief that it has lightened the burdens and lessened the temptations of some lives; that it has amused, encouraged, instructed and improved numbers of those that help to make up our community, and influence its well-being and standing. It has certainly afforded the means of information to all, and in some measure, at least, fulfilled the obligation to keep the door of the store house of knowledge ever open.

— *Luther Conant in the Town Report of 1893*



"a permanent symbol of the union between Letters and Liberty"

— *The Reverend James Fletcher in the Town Report of 1889*