

The Windsor Library

All the brave efforts of those loyal Windsor citizens finally resulting in the acquiring of the Mather house for the Windsor public library, must be told in a page by itself in Windsor's history.

The purchase of stated place by the trustees, happened at a time when old houses in New England were perhaps not valued quite as they are today. As the trustees opened the doors of their acquisition, it was not surprising that some of them were more for demolishing the decrepit and neglected building at once, and in its place creating some new structure. The days of the late Victorian, yellow brick and brownstone library building in country towns still prevailed.

However aesthetics were not to be gainsaid. The place was too priceless; moreover it so absolutely fitted the site. It flanked the southern end of one of the loveliest elm-gaused greens in New England, with a facade of dignity and beauty. Within there were floors, mantles, fireplaces, wainscotings, balustrades of no mean order; an old Dutch kitchen in the rear basement where witches might dance on Halloween! Beyond the picturesque brick porch a terraced drop to the brook below, which had possibilities for a small garden. But it was only too evident that restoration would be expensive.

Thanks to the enthusiastic young people who presently rented the place, making the house habitable and repairing interior and exterior, those who had doubted the wisdom of allowing it to stand were won over. The library house was saved. How eventually it might become a museum for colonial Windsor was even among the dreams of some of the trustees.

The position of the building known as the "office," a low western wing, was set aside as the library proper. Partitions and upper floors in this wing, which contained three rooms downstairs and two upstairs, were knocked away. The library thus had a place which was for the time being amply large for its purpose.

The trustees were fortunate to find a builder who appreciated the situation, where the room was reconstructed. He seemed to love each particular brick of the great central chimney which was now wholly exposed from floor to roof. This chimney was sandblasted and restored under his direction. An improvised cornice was copied from a Salem house. The settees in the University Club in Hartford served as a pattern to flank the chimney on three sides with the generous fireplace for a fourth. Ends of the old beams were left exposed in the rough plastered walls.

Citizens donated furniture and curios in keeping with what might be as far as possible the modest reproduction of a colonial interior.

And so the old "office" became a home for books, a modern library, where, too, perhaps, those colonial founders of Windsor might have felt at home.

Ruel C. Tuttle
Greenfield, Massachusetts
June 6, 1933

Note: Mr. Tuttle in 1941 donated \$25,000 to convert and enlarge the Mather house into a library.