

The History of Beardsley Library



1874

to

2024



Cover Photos:

Top: Beardsley Block (center building with horse in front of it), where the Beardsley Library first opened in 1874. Photo ca. 1900.

Bottom: The Beardsley & Memorial Library

Both photos from the collections of the Beardsley Library.

*Dedicated to all those who came before us,
who made & maintained this library for us
and for future generations.*

*We are proud to receive their inheritance
and continue their legacy.*

Written by Benjamin Cruson, Local History Librarian
Using resources available in the Virginia T. Leighton Genealogy and Local History Room at the Beardsley Library
For the 150th Anniversary of the Beardsley Library, 2024
Revised and expanded, 2025

Beardsley & Memorial Library
40 Munro Place
Winsted, CT 06098
(860) 379 - 6043

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A Timeline of the Beardsley Library

1801 – Elliot Beardsley is born in Huntington, Connecticut

1811 – Delia Rockwell is born in Winsted.

1838 – Elliot Beardsley and Delia Rockwell are married

1871 – Elliot Beardsley passes away at the age of 69

1874 – The Beardsley Library is opened in the Beardsley Block using \$10,000 from Delia Beardsley.

1875 – John Boyd donates bound copies of the *Winsted Herald* to the library.

1878 – Delia Rockwell Beardsley, benefactress and founder of the Beardsley Library, passes away at the age of 67.

1890 – The first year that the Beardsley Library is required to pay rent for its space in Beardsley Block.

1891 – Jenison J. Whiting purchases the John T. Rockwell property on the corner of Main Street and Munro Place. Also, \$1,000, is left to the Beardsley Library in the will of Martha Beardsley, daughter of Elliot Beardsley by his first wife. This is the library's first bequest of money.

1893 – A fire in Beardsley Block nearly destroys the Beardsley Library. Nearly all 6,500 books are moved to safety in the chapel across the street.

1897 – J.J. Whiting begins construction of the Memorial Library building. He dies in October before it is completed.

1898 – The Beardsley Library re-opens in the new Memorial Library building on Munro Place.

1899 – The Beardsley Library becomes a free public library with a \$1,500 annual appropriation from the town of Winchester.

1904 – Miss Amanda Church leaves \$6,000 and the proceeds from the sale of her family farm to the library in her will.

1909 – the second floor of the Memorial Library is put to use as reading and meeting space.

1911 – Louise Carrington retires after 37 years as Beardsley Library's first head librarian.

1914 – Mary Phelps Whiting, widow of J.J. Whiting, passes away, leaving \$17,236.51 to the Memorial Library.

1917 – The library's first flagpole is erected as a show of support for the soldiers fighting in World War I.

ca. 1920 – The Children's Department is opened on the second floor above the reading room.

1925 – Judge George Carrington, brother of Louise and the last of the original Beardsley Library Trustees, passes away after 51 years on the Library Board.

1931 – Large stones fall off the roof of the library including the stone above the front door that bears the "18" of the library's construction year. The matching "97" fell off the roof 17 years later in 1948.

1939 – The Beardsley Library and the Memorial Library are merged to form the Beardsley & Memorial Library.

1944 – Elliot G. Beardsley, the grandson of Elliot and Delia, dies. He was the last of the Beardsley family to support the library as a Trustee.

1946 – Laura Carrington, wife of George Carrington, passes away, leaving \$42,062.02 to the Beardsley & Memorial Library.

1948 – The Genealogy Room is opened using the genealogy collection of Library Board President Edward Payson Jones.

1950 – The Art Room opens on the second floor in the large room above the stacks.

1953 – Edward Payson Jones dies, leaving a trust fund for the library. The Genealogy room is named in his honor and his son, Roderick B. Jones, begins managing the Genealogy collection.

1955 – The library survives the great flood unscathed. The only books lost in the disaster were ones checked out to patrons. The original Beardsley Block is demolished.

1963 – Mabel White, Assistant Librarian, retires after 46 years working at the library, setting a record for the longest-serving Beardsley Library employee.

1967 – Dudley Vaill dies after serving 61 years on the Library Board, setting a record for longest board tenure.

1968 – The library begins loaning vinyl records.

1969 – Book delivery for “shut-ins” begins

1970 – The Friends of the Beardsley Library is formed and headed by Virginia Leighton

1971 – The library joins the Connecticut Library Association

1985 – A 1,600 square foot addition is constructed on the south side of the library.

1995 – Beardsley Library connects to the internet

2003 – The New Foundations renovation of the basement is completed, making the basement available for use by the public and creating the Community Room for presentations and gatherings.

2010 – The library's catalog is made available online.

ca. 2011 – The Teen Room opens on the second floor above the reading room.

2019 – The library acquires a book-mobile for book deliveries to homebound patrons and participation at community events.

The History of the Beardsley & Memorial Libraries

The Beardsley Library *1874 – 1898*

According to John Boyd, the earliest library in Winsted was probably opened sometime around 1800 in the office of Solomon Rockwell & Bros. This office sat on the south side of Lake Street near its intersection with Main Street. Nothing is known about this library except that it was gone by about 1810.

At least five other attempts were made to start libraries in Winsted and Winchester during the first half of the 19th century, but most of these attempts lasted only 5-10 years before interest waned, the libraries were closed, and their books were sold off. These libraries were generally one of two types: either “youth” libraries containing the type of entertaining content popular with younger readers, or religious libraries meant to inspire virtuous living.

One example of the former was a library set up around 1808 by Joel Miller in the West School District. Miller was 18 years old at the time and established the library in his father’s, Asahel Miller’s, house on Spencer Street. This first attempt must have been short lived because only four years later, another library was organized in the nearby home of Col. Hosea Hinsdale by a group of young men who filled it with books described by John Boyd as “such as the people wanted to read rather than such as the severe moralist would have said they ought to read.” This library and another similar one founded in the East Village in 1820 were short lived, and their modest collections were sold off after only about 5 years.

The latter type of libraries – the religious ones - were generally more successful because they were tied to an institution. The earliest known example of these was the Winsted Historical and Theological Library, which was established on North Main Street around 1810 and operated for about 5-10 years before its waning popularity caused the pastor managing it to sell the collection off.

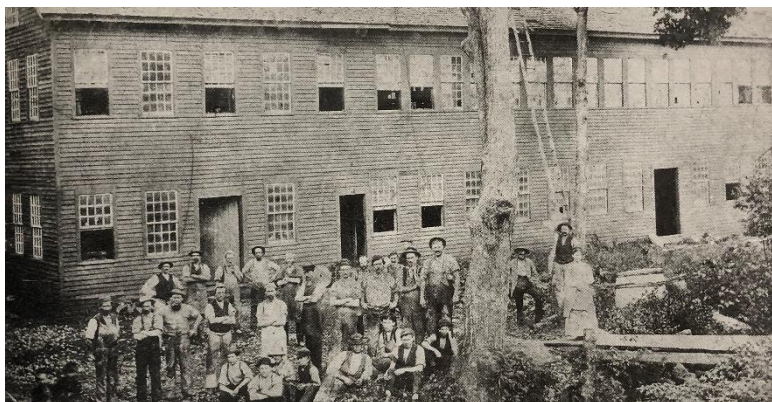
The longest-lasting attempt at a library was of this religious kind and was started sometime shortly after 1820. It was located in the Methodist Episcopal Church and, as might be expected, consisted only of religious and historical books. Money for new books was raised through membership fees (called taxes) paid by participating individuals. Over time, as enthusiasm for the project faded, these “taxes” stopped being paid and membership dwindled. Poor management meant that books began to go missing from the collection, and to make up for the loss of revenue from the taxes, the library began selling off books in violation of its own by-laws. By 1860, it only had 6 members and the only books left were the ones nobody had deemed worth stealing from the collection.



Elliot Beardsley

The question of a public library in Winsted went unexplored for the next dozen or so years until after the passing of Elliot Beardsley on January 19, 1871.

Beardsley had arrived in Winsted in 1840 and went into business with Theodore Hinsdale, who at that time owned a Scythe factory on Lake Street. The business eventually passed to Beardsley's sole management and made



The Beardsley Scythe Co., ca. 1863

for him a considerable fortune. With that money, he built the Beardsley House hotel on the north corner of Lake Street and Main in the 1840s and purchased the Empire Knife Company in partnership with James Alvord in 1856 – all of which further increased his wealth.

Outside of his business dealings, he was a deacon and one of the first officers of the Second Congregational Church, Director and President of the Winsted Bank, and served as both Representative and Senator in the state legislature. By the time he died, he was likely the wealthiest and certainly one of the most influential and well-respected men in Winsted.

Building a library, however, was not his idea. With his passing, his money passed to his wife, Delia, and in 1873, she called Reverend L.H. Hallock and a couple other men to her home to discuss ideas for a memorial to her late husband. According to a letter Hallock wrote to Louise Carrington twenty years later, Mrs. Beardsley was “proposing to expend some \$3,000, and was in doubt whether to build a granite shaft, a fountain, or what. We mentioned a public library, but the cost was somewhat more than she had

contemplated; but after numerous interviews it was decided that the Library would be the best thing if it could be compassed." She eventually committed to increasing her original \$3,000 expenditure to \$10,000 – the amount that was thought to be needed for the library project.

Mrs. Beardsley hand-picked seven trustees to oversee the management of the new library: John T. Rockwell (her cousin), Edward R. Beardsley (her son), Henry Gay, James R. Alvord, Samuel B. Forbes (Her son-in-law), Leavitt H. Hallock, and George Carrington. They held their first meeting in Hallock's study on April 15, 1874 and elected their first slate of officers: Hallock as President, John T. Rockwell as Vice-President, George Carrington as Corresponding Secretary, and Edward Beardsley as Recording Secretary and Treasurer.

Over the following months, the trustees set about hashing out the details regarding how the library was to operate. Their first task was to hire a librarian. They first offered the position to Miss Mary P. Hinsdale, however she declined it, and so it was instead offered to Miss Louise Carrington, sister of board member George Carrington. She accepted and became a central figure not only in the library's early history, but also in the library profession in general through her involvement with the Connecticut Library Association, which she helped found in 1891.

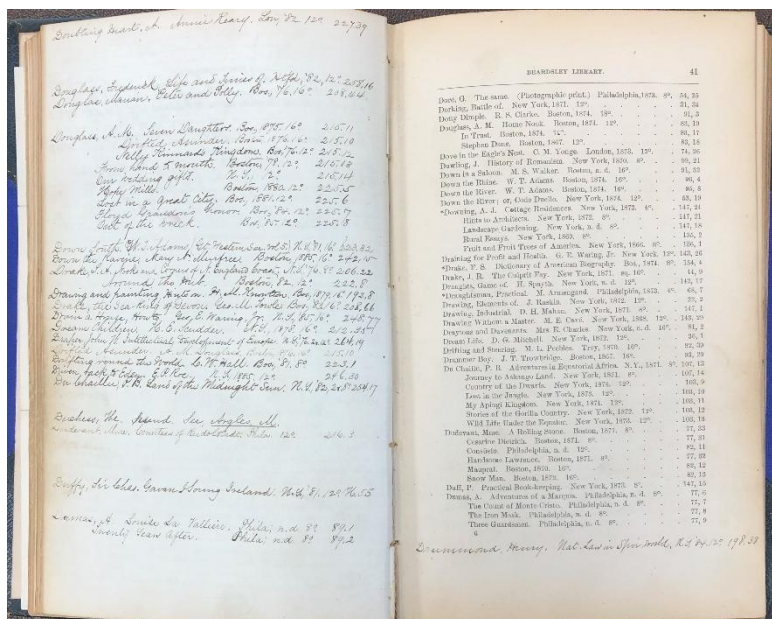
The librarian having been chosen, the trustees wrote up a list of rules for the library including hours of operation and cost for subscriptions. The decision to require library patrons to pay a subscription fee was an unfortunate necessity. Delia Beardsley had provided \$10,000 for the library: \$5,000 for the initial purchase of books and \$5,000 to be invested, the profit of which was to pay for the maintenance and expansion of the book collection. She had also provided rent-free space for the library for five years on the second

floor of the Beardsley Block on Main Street and promised to pay for furnishing the space herself. She did not plan for running costs of the library's operation such as pay for the librarian (Louise Carrington was paid \$300 her first year) and the cost of heating the rooms. For this reason, charging for subscriptions was required to make ends meet. Individual annual subscriptions cost \$2 and a family annual subscription cost \$5. When compared to the average unskilled laborer's daily pay of about \$1.50, this rate was within reach for most workers unless they had a large family to provide for.

The library's hours were also chosen to provide access for the working man. It was open every day except Sunday from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm and 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm. Despite the fact that the workers of this period generally worked six days a week and ten hours a day, the library was open late enough that they could avail themselves of its services if they were so inclined.

The Beardsley Library opened for public inspection at 6:15 on September 15, 1874. To access the library, patrons had to ascend a stairway that was sandwiched between two storefronts on the front of the brick Beardsley Block building. At the top, the passageway to the Library went to the right and ended at a long room that stretched from the front of the building overlooking Main Street all the way to the back looking out on the Mad River. The original 3,025 books and magazines were on shelves lining the north wall – directly across from the visitor as they entered the library room. Because Melvil Dewey did not publish his now-famous Dewey Decimal System until two years later (1876), the books were arranged on the shelves in a manner devised by Miss Carrington. She sorted books first according to the following subjects: Religious and Philosophical,

English and American Literature, Literary Miscellany, Poetry and Drama, Periodicals, Fiction, Juvenile, Travel and Description, Biography, History, Science, Miscellany, and Books of Reference. After being sorted by subject, they were sorted by author's last name before finally being sorted by size.



One of the early library catalogs. This was the librarian's copy, which had blank pages facing each printed page so the librarian could write-in new additions to the collection.

To find a book, patrons had the choice of searching the card catalog or the bound catalog book. The card catalog was only available sorted by author, but the catalog book allowed patrons to search by either author or title. Both were available at the library itself, but the bound catalog book could also be purchased by patrons for anywhere between \$1.00 and 25 cents depending on the age of the

catalog. Since the library was constantly purchasing new books, older catalogs were less complete, and therefore did not cost as much.

Books could not be checked out on the night of the grand opening, but subscriptions were available for purchase. At 8:00 a short dedication ceremony was held. It began with an invocation by B.T. Abbott, followed by a statement by Leavitt Hallock explaining the origin, purpose and plan of the library. An inspirational speech propounding the importance of access to good books was then delivered by Rev. Dr. Joseph Eldridge of Norfolk. With this short and simple ceremony, the Beardsley Library was officially opened, and the next day it began lending out books.

As may be fitting for a library, Beardsley had a fairly quiet start. The most exciting change during the first ten years was the donation of an almost complete run of the *Winsted Herald* in 1875. These bound copies of the local newspaper dated back to 1856 and were donated by John Boyd, who had used them in researching his *Annals and Family Records of Winchester, Connecticut*. This donation made the Beardsley library the only known repository of historical Winsted newspapers, and these papers, which decades later were transferred to microfilm, have been an invaluable resource to library patrons ever since.

By 1884, the library had grown from just over 3,000 volumes to just under 5,000. The library's roughly 200 subscribers were borrowing about 9,000 books each year, and everything seemed to be going smoothly. An extension of the library's original lease allowed it to stay rent-free in its room in the Beardsley Block, and income from the endowment, subscriptions, and late fees were providing sufficient money for the library to expand. The bookcases now filled up both the north and south walls of the library room, and it was

becoming clear that continuing success would require larger accommodations. There was also a concern that future owners of the Beardsley Block may eventually start charging rent, and so the Board of Trustees started looking for a larger, more permanent home for the library.

Six years later, in 1890, the Beardsley Library was charged rent for the first time: \$200 for the year. This squeezed the Beardsley Library's finances, but it would receive a boost the following year when Martha Beardsley, the daughter of Elliot Beardsley by his first wife, passed away, leaving \$1000 to her father's namesake institution. That same year, unbeknownst to most people in Winsted, J.J. Whiting purchased a piece of property on the corner of Main Street and Munro Place where the residence of John T. Rockwell was standing at the time.



The Rockwell Residence, which once stood where the Beardsley & Memorial Library is today.

Jenison J. Whiting was a businessman with his fingers in many pies. He grew up on a farm in Norfolk and worked there until getting a job at a local foundry and then at a flour & feed business. He eventually moved to Winsted where business prospects were brighter than Norfolk, and he worked his way up through the business world until he became a partner in a soap and candle factory and owned several hardware and variety stores. Now, late in life and possessing a considerable amount of wealth, Whiting had purchased the Rockwell property on Munro Place to build a permanent library building for Winsted, although his plans would remain a secret for several more years.

In the meantime, disaster nearly cut short the history of the Beardsley Library. At about 5 o'clock on the evening of January 3, 1893, Joseph Franz, a clerk at H.C. Price's Grocery Store which occupied the space beneath the library on the first floor of Beardsley Block, went into the cellar of the building with a lighted lamp to get kerosene. The floor of the basement was covered in sawdust to soak up any oils leaking from the kerosene barrels. According to an article in the *Winsted Herald*, "He had no sooner reached the cellar bottom than the lamp exploded, and the sawdust...ignited, and in an instant, the cellar was filled with fire and smoke."

Union Hose Co. No. 1 arrived promptly, but their ability to throw water on the fire was hampered by frost on the fire hydrants. Once water finally started to flow, it proved impossible to hit the fire with it because of the profuse, blinding black smoke and the peculiar angle at which the firemen had to try to spray it into the basement. The fire jumped to the first floor when five barrels full of kerosene exploded, and soon afterward the floor of the second story began to sag and buckle from the heat below.

It was not long before all of Winsted's fire companies had arrived to fight the blaze, including a hook and ladder apparatus which was immediately put to work clearing the possessions of tenants from the upper floors. At the same time, hotel guests and neighbors began to do the same using connecting walkways from the neighboring Beardsley House Hotel. Through these efforts, the upper floors of the Beardsley Block were almost completely emptied of items. The Beardsley Library, which was in imminent danger of losing its entire collection, lost only a handful of books. Most of the 6,500 volumes in the library were successfully removed to the chapel across the street where Miss Carrington (who was out of town at the time of the fire) spent the next several weeks reorganizing the books with the help of a small group of volunteers. Repairs were quickly made to the Beardsley Block, and six weeks later the library was back in its home.

Despite the difficulties of funding and fire, the library continued to expand. By 1895, the library had grown to include 7,200 volumes, including a large collection of medical books which were donated by Emily Steele, widow of the late Dr. Harvey Steele. George Carrington explained the growth of the library in his address at the dedication of the Memorial Library in 1898, explaining how the number of books grew "from year to year in the old room, first filling the north side; then the larger half of the south side; then the eight sections in the two alcoves; then two tiers on each of the lower shelves; then the top of the cases; then the coat closet, stacked like cord wood until the daily cry of the agonized soul of the librarian was for more room – more room."

Most residents of Winsted were still unaware of J.J. Whiting's plans to construct a library building, which had

unfortunately become stalled for unknown reasons. As a result, in July of 1895, movement was made by another group towards this goal. A group of ladies from Winsted including Mary Hinsdale and Louise Carrington went to Salisbury to attend the dedication of the new Scoville Library building. They were so impressed by the beautiful building that they were motivated to form the "Ladies' Library Association of Winsted." Its articles stated its purpose was "to stimulate interest in the Beardsley Library, increase its membership, extend its usefulness, and solicit gifts of books & money, looking eventually toward a fire-proof building & a free library."

Through annual membership fees of 25 cents and fund-raisers such as lectures, receptions and lawn parties, the Ladies' Library Association raised \$329.65 over the next three years. The efforts of these ladies were widely lauded, and the news of their activities injected new life into J.J. Whiting's library project. His plans again started to progress, and in July of 1897, the ground was broken and the granite foundation laid for what would become the Memorial Library building.



The Interior of the Beardsley Library at the Beardsley Block circa 1890. The portrait of Elliot Beardsley that still hangs in the library today can be seen hanging among the books on the shelves. The table in the foreground is now in the Genealogy Room. (Photo courtesy of the F.H. DeMars collection of the Connecticut Museum of Culture and History)

The Memorial Library *1898 – 1939*

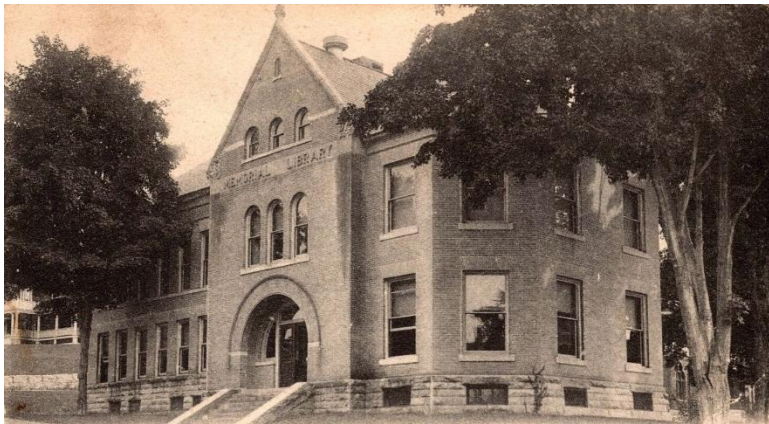
Jenison J. Whiting did not live to see his benefaction completed. He died after a short illness on October 22, 1897. Fortunately, he had the forethought to include provision for the project in his will. It said, "I give to four persons the lot above mentioned with directions to erect on it a Memorial Library building for the use of the inhabitants of the town of Winchester...said building to be used for the purpose of giving a home to any existing library or libraries ...to furnish a place for a museum and art gallery or reading room." He left \$15,000 to accomplish this purpose. The four people chosen to be the trustees of the new library and to guide the project forward were Whiting's widow, Mary Phelps Whiting; her brother, William B. Phelps; and Beardsley Library Trustees George Carrington and Sidney F. Dickerman.

The first challenge the new building faced was a lack of funds. Construction ended up costing about \$5,000 more than what Whiting's will had apportioned. Mary Whiting generously stepped forward to cover the difference and, in addition, donated a neighboring piece of land which she hoped would be useful in the future for expansion of the library.

Whiting had refused to have his name put on the building, and so the new library became known simply as the "Memorial Library." Since the building had been constructed to house existing libraries and not to create a brand new one, the trustees of the Memorial Library quickly worked out a deal with the space-starved trustees of the Beardsley Library: the Beardsley Library could occupy the Memorial Library building rent-free provided they pay to

insure the building and its contents. The deal was supposedly the creation of Judge George Carrington, who served on both boards, and with him as its champion, the Beardsley Library agreed without hesitation.

The money that had been raised by the Ladies' Library Association toward guaranteeing expanded quarters for the Beardsley Library was now put to good use to pay for the moving and re-cataloguing of its nearly 8,000 books. The transfer took place on June 21, 1898 and was led by Louise Carrington, Emma Spear, and C. Belle Maltbie of Falls Village with the help of unnamed others. The books were successfully moved, re-catalogued, re-labeled using the Dewey Decimal System, and sorted into their appropriate locations on the shelves.



*The Memorial Library as it appeared shortly after opening.
Photo ca. 1906.*

The Beardsley Library officially opened in the Memorial Library building with a dedication ceremony on July 1, 1898. It had been hoped that Governor Lorrin Cooke, who lived only a few doors up the hill on the corner of Munro Place and Hillside Ave., would preside over the festivities, but he had been called away on other duties. In his place, Reverend

Calhoun of the Second Congregational Church oversaw the ceremonies. Among several speakers, George Carrington delivered a speech telling the history of the library and calling on the people of Winsted – especially the wealthier classes – to find a way to make it possible for the Beardsley Library to be a free public library so that it might benefit a wider array of Winsted’s citizens.

When the library opened that day, the first level looked much as it does today with the reading room facing Main Street and the stack room on the opposite side of the central hallway. The most noticeable difference would have been that the service desk stretched across the end of the hall, blocking access to the stack room. At the time, it was common practice for the library staff to be the only ones allowed to access the stacks so that books would not get stolen or placed back on the shelves out of order. The small size of the room in the Beardsley Block made such an arrangement impractical, but the new library was so spacious that things could now be done “properly.”

The second floor had one large room above the stack room and two smaller rooms over the reading room. All three upper rooms were left empty for several years after the library opened because their space was not yet needed.

Despite the new accommodations being rent-free, the Beardsley Library was still running on a tight budget. 1898 is the first year that the minutes of the Board of Trustees mention the need to borrow money to cover expenses. The Board approved the borrowing of \$150 to pay the library’s budget deficit, and the following year, 1899, they were forced to borrow twice as much.

In reality, money had been an issue for several years. Thanks to the economic recessions of the 1890s, the amount the library’s endowments had been making on their

investments had fallen significantly, and for much of that decade the library only stayed afloat through the generosity of wealthy donors.

Matters were made worse in 1895 when the Gilbert School opened. When William Gilbert donated the funds to build the school, it was his wish that it would contain a free public library. At first the privilege to borrow books from the Gilbert Library was restricted to school faculty and students, but in 1898 that policy was changed. Now that residents of Winchester could take out books for free from the Gilbert Library, the Beardsley Library was losing paying subscribers. As income dropped, it became more and more urgent that the library find another source of funding.

With many of the trustees already wishing for Beardsley to become a free library, work was already underway to make that dream a reality. Early in 1899, the Connecticut General Assembly passed Joint Resolution 170 which allowed the town of Winchester to provide an annual appropriation for the Beardsley Library “not to exceed one-third of one mil.” At the annual town meeting, the Town of Winchester voted a \$1,500 appropriation to the Beardsley Library provided it become a free public library. The trustees were only too happy to oblige, and on July 1, 1899, the Beardsley Library did away with paid subscriptions and became a free public library.

The first free public subscriber to the Beardsley Library was Samuel N. Lincoln of 37 High Street – part-owner of the firm of Newton & Lincoln: sellers of watches, jewelry, and silverware (by uncanny coincidence, he was born in 1874 – the same year the Beardsley Library originally opened). Mr. Lincoln, like all library members from this time forward, received two library cards: one for non-fiction books and one for everything else. Each card was good for borrowing one

book at a time. At the same time, members of the new free library also enjoyed the privilege of open access to the library stacks – a new trend that was meant to match the more open, democratic atmosphere of the free public library. As a result, the main desk was cut back to allow patrons to walk directly into the stack room.

Making the library free to the inhabitants of Winchester had the predictable effect of increasing circulation. From the late 1870s through 1898, the Beardsley Library's total yearly circulation had remained relatively steady around 10,000. In Beardsley's first year as a free library, that number increased fourfold to about 41,000. Membership also exploded from only a few hundred subscribers to over 1,700 registered borrowers.

With a large piece of the library's funding ensured by the town, the library continued to function smoothly for quite some time. The fact that the Memorial Library building was managed by a separate board from the Beardsley Library, which managed only the contents of the library, did not seem to cause any significant difficulties.

September 1, 1911, brought the end of an era for the Beardsley Library with the retirement of Louise Carrington as Head Librarian. She had served the library for 37 years since its opening in 1874, and at the time of her retirement she was the longest-serving librarian in the state of Connecticut. Her service to Beardsley was exceptional and her decision-making and leadership were essential to getting the library started off on the right foot at a time when practically nothing was standardized in the world of libraries. Her retirement was marked by a reception held in her honor at the library on November 16. There were over one hundred attendees. Among the gifts given to her by the grateful people of Winchester were a purse, a leather-bound set of the

resolutions passed in her honor by the Beardsley trustees, and a velvet handbag given on behalf of the library assistants who worked with her.

Louise Carrington's successor was Helena Alford, a native of Winsted who had spent the previous couple years working as a librarian in New York City. During her time and that of the following librarian, Dorothy Whiting Terrell (hired in 1916), new bequests from late library supporters continued to contribute to the financial well-being of the institution. One of the most notable, received by the Memorial Library in 1914, was the remainder of Mary Phelps Whiting's estate worth \$17,236.51. This money – only slightly smaller than what had been spent to build the Memorial Library in the first place, was invested, and its profits were used for many purposes, but especially for the 1920 refitting of the second floor to create a children's room.

During this time, another Winsted native, Mabel White, started working at the library as an assistant. Starting in 1917, she eventually shattered Louise Carrington's service record when she retired in 1963 after 46 years. In the meantime, she was one of several library workers and volunteers who helped the new children's room (opened in 1920 on the second floor above the reading room) grow into an essential and widely valued part of the library.

In 1924, the portrait of Louise Carrington which today hangs behind the main circulation desk was donated to the library by Louise's brother and Library Trustee George Carrington. Louise had died on October 2, 1918, so the watercolor painting by Boston artist H.B. Chatterton had been made from a photograph of her. The library trustees decided to give the portrait a place of honor behind the librarian's desk where it replaced the portrait of Mary Phelps Whiting which had hung there since the Memorial Library

opened. It has remained a constant fixture behind the circulation desk ever since.

The following year, George Carrington passed away from complications from a stroke. Having spent 51 years on the Beardsley Library's Board, he was the last of the original Trustees and the longest serving trustee up to that point. Although he did not leave a notable gift to the Library in his will, he did leave a considerable estate to his wife, who, upon her death in 1946, left over \$42,000 to the library for the purpose of purchasing books.



The portrait of Louise Carrington that has always hung behind the main desk.

Becoming the Beardsley & Memorial Library *1939 – 1997*

On July 31, 1939, the Beardsley Library and the Memorial Library were merged by an act of the Connecticut General Assembly into a single organization: the Beardsley and Memorial Library. The number of trustees on the board was increased to nine to accommodate the combination of the two existing boards, and the stated purpose of the new consolidated library emphasized the wish of J.J. Whiting that the library should include a museum and art gallery.

The first steps were taken toward this end at the annual meeting of the Board of Trustees in March of 1945. The minutes for this meeting record that the library “proposes to establish, maintain, and exhibit, a collection of paintings and other works of art, confined to such works by residents of this locality as may be donated,” and also that the library “expresses itself in favor of the collection of genealogical material including Genealogies, books containing genealogical matter, pamphlets and manuscripts.”

This goal had one obstacle: the rooms which were proposed for this use had gone unused for some time. With the exception of the children’s room, which was located above the reading room, the second floor had been empty since the Historical Society moved out in the 1920s. Deterioration followed from neglect, and work needed to be done before the rooms could be considered usable. Fortunately, the following year, the library received a bequest of over \$42,000 from the estate of Laura Carrington, wife of the late George Carrington. The money was used to replaster and repaint the future Genealogy and Art rooms and to install new fluorescent lighting.

After significant expense and preparation, the first of these rooms, the Genealogy Room, opened in November 1948 on the second floor in a small room beside the children's room. The bulk of the Genealogy collection had been acquired through Library Board President Edward Payson Jones, who donated his extensive personal library to get the collection started. In the years leading up to his death in 1953, Jones continued to support the growth of the Genealogy Room by offering a matching donation of up to \$25 per month for the purchase of new materials. Upon his death, he left a trust fund for the library as well. Due to his generosity and his personal interest in Genealogy, the Genealogy Room was named in his honor. His son, Roderick B. Jones, took over management of the Genealogy Room after his passing.



The circulation desk around 1940. Seated behind the desk is Miss Mabel White, Beardsley's longest serving staff member (46 years, from 1917 to 1963).



Two views of the reading room of the Memorial Library around 1939. Note the sign hanging from the chandelier in the top photo that says "SILENCE."



In 1949, work started on the Art Room. The large room on the second floor above the stacks was designated to become the art room, but it needed repairs before it could be used. It is unclear what the needed repairs were or why they were needed, but the building was now 50 years old and the inconsistently used room may have merely been in need of refurbishment.

To accomplish this, the Library Board gave \$500 to the Litchfield Art Association to repair the room. It proved to need more work than expected, and so Edward Jones stepped forward to fund the rest. He managed to raise \$1,000 from local businesses and paid the remainder out of his own pocket.

In 1950, the first exhibit was put on display in the Art Room. It was arranged with the assistance of Alice Seacord, the first President of the Litchfield County Art Association, and Rev. Jay Gould Seacord, the rector of Saint James church. The exhibit included their artwork as well as several charcoal sketches made by Edward Jones. For the following several decades, the art room would not only display works by local artists (some of which still adorn the walls of the library today), but would also host talks, demonstrations, and classes led by local artists and art teachers.

Unlike much of Main Street, the infamous flood caused by Hurricane Diane in 1955 left the Beardsley & Memorial Library virtually untouched. Thanks to the library's position on a rise just above Main Street, the flood waters never reached the building. The only books that the flood destroyed were the ones that had been checked out to Winsted residents when their homes and businesses were washed away.

The Beardsley Block, which had first housed the Beardsley Library in 1874, was less fortunate. The building was, in fact, so well-built that it survived the flood despite its construction on the edge of the Mad River. However, in the wake of the flood, the State of Connecticut seized on the opportunity afforded by the destruction of so many buildings to widen Main Street. The Beardsley Block was a necessary casualty of that project. Before it was taken down, the fire escape was removed and added to the Memorial Library building to provide a second means of egress from the second floor. The fire escape was later removed to make way for the building addition in 1985 which added a second staircase, making the fire escape superfluous.



The demolition of Beardsley Block, as seen from the rear of the building. The church-like building across the street was once the church that offered shelter for the Beardsley Library's books after the fire of 1893. That building itself succumbed to fire in 1979.

Going into the 1960s, the library world was changing, and Beardsley started doing its best to adapt. Since their inception, libraries had focused on the lending of print media (books, magazines, newspapers, etc.), but the rise of vinyl records presented a new opportunity for libraries to widen their offerings. In 1968, Beardsley began loaning records to patrons, and thanks to the efforts of Librarian Hazel Johnstone, these new materials as well as the traditional print offerings were now available through a delivery service to “shut-ins” who were unable to leave their homes.

The following year, the first floor of the library received the improvement of carpeting under the guidance of Mrs. Raymond Bell and Mrs. Joseph Rosgen of the Greenwoods Garden Club. The new flooring not only covered up the old, aging floor, but also provided a sound-dampening effect which helped to keep the library comfortably quiet.

In the meantime, Virginia Leighton, who would later become a library Trustee and President of the Board, and Hazel Johnstone, the Head Librarian, organized the Friends of the Beardsley Library in 1970. Their first project was a fund-raising campaign to buy a sign for the library to be placed on Main Street. After the successful completion of this effort, the Friends fell into brief inactivity, but were revived in 1975 and grew into an instrumental contributor to the library’s funding and programs, although several more periods of inactivity would limit their contributions until their final revivification in 1996 which has continued to the present day.

With all of its increased offerings and activity, Beardsley was facing that perennial problem of libraries: space. Although there was a definite need for more space within the building, a more immediate need was for parking space. The library had been built before the ubiquity of the automobile, and so no space had been planned for the parking of

such vehicles. So far, parking on the street had been sufficient, but the need for more space was becoming painfully apparent. In 1970, the library began looking into the purchase of the Boulli property next door as a possible lot for expansion. In September of 1970, the library purchased the Boulli property under the condition that Joseph and his wife would be able to continue living there for the next three years. In 1974, after the Boullis had moved out of their house, it was demolished and the land was used to expand the parking lot.

The library expanded its Board of Trustees the same year, raising the number of members to twelve in recognition of the fact that it was now serving the communities of Barkhamsted and Colebrook which had contracted with Beardsley to be their public library.

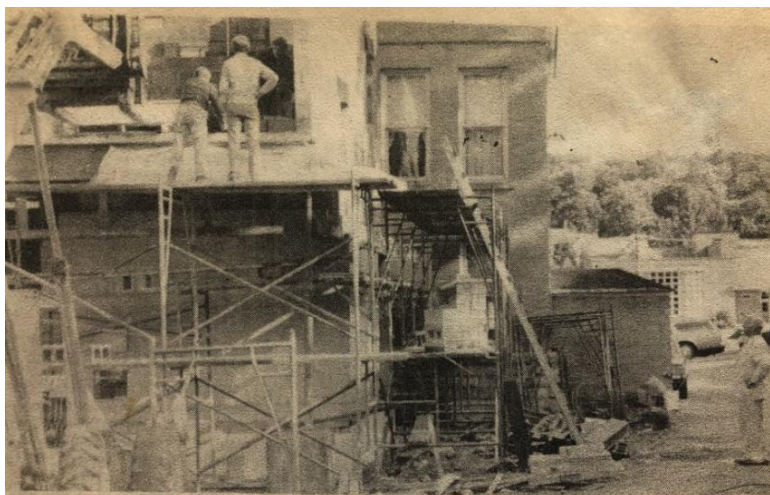
One more expansion was still needed: that of the building itself. Planning for an addition started in the late 1970s, but the cost and complexity of the project meant that it would take several years to realize.

The project was beset by problems early on in 1983 when there was a controversy over the awarding of a grant the library was relying on to fund the work. Beardsley had applied for a \$200,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education. It was almost certain that Winchester would win the grant because the award was based on the unemployment in the town, and with an unemployment rate of 12.7 percent, Winchester had the highest rate in Connecticut. Given this, one can understand why the Beardsley Trustees were surprised to hear that the State Library Board, who was administering the grant, rejected the application. The reason given was that the application was incomplete. Virginia Leighton replied that the application was not really

incomplete – it was just that the state wanted a more detailed description of the expansion plans.

The Hartford Library, which was in the same situation as Winchester, added its voice to Beardsley's, and together they were able to convince the State Library Board to extend the deadline for the applications so the mistakes could be corrected. This understandably outraged the three towns (Killingly, Thomaston, and Naugatuck) which had been the awardees prior to the extension of the deadline. A debate ensued over the proper disposition of the grant money and the ultimate outcome is unclear, but Beardsley did eventually end up with \$200,000 in grant money from the state and federal governments to use toward the addition.

The original estimate for the cost of the addition was \$300,000. It was designed to provide an additional 1,600 square feet of space and updates to existing library infrastructure. Among the improvements it was meant to include were the replacement of existing wiring, an expansion of the children's room, an expansion of the lobby and office



The addition under construction in 1985.

space, new handicapped access (an elevator), a second staircase (to eliminate the need for the fire escape), and paving of the parking lot. The plans changed only slightly, changing the proposed children's program room into an expansion for the Genealogy Room. Virginia Leighton was a primary advocate for this change, and the room is now named the Virginia T. Leighton Local History Room in her honor.

By the middle of February 1985, the Trustees had accepted a bid for work from Joseph Francese, Inc. of Pittsfield, Massachusetts. The bid was \$447,447 – more than twice the original estimate, and by May of that year, the estimate had climbed even higher to \$527,680. None the less, the work was started, and by the end of 1986, the addition was complete and ready to be used.

At about the time that the addition was being completed, Hazel Johnstone was forced to retire as Library Director due to the onset of Post-Polio Syndrome, which was beginning to affect her muscles and mobility. Her successor was Mary Ann Werner, who had been working at Beardsley since 1972 – first as a volunteer, then as a clerk, children's librarian, and assistant librarian. She made it her goal to maintain the traditional expectations of the library as a repository of knowledge while transforming it from the quiet, stuffy reputation of library stereotypes into a more laid back and active atmosphere – more of a



*Mary Ann Werner
Library Director (1986 – 1995)*

community center than just a quiet place for reading and studying. She succeeded in that transformation and prepared Beardsley for the 21st century when the library purchased its first computers under her leadership. She retired on January 7, 1995 – only months before Beardsley took the next step into the digital world by connecting to the internet.

In 1997, Beardsley yet again expanded its offerings when it joined the Western Connecticut Library Council's Video Circuit. This was a sharing program through which libraries could make video tapes available for their patrons to borrow. At the same time, the library began accepting donations of video tapes.

New Foundations and a New Millennium

1998 - present

The next year saw the kick-off of a capital campaign for yet another library expansion. Planning for the project had actually started several years prior, but 1998 brought the official launch of the New Foundations campaign which, with just over \$100,000 from the state of Connecticut, aimed to raise \$460,000 for the purpose of renovating the basement and turning it into suitable space for public use.

The library basement was said to consist of 3,816 square feet of space, but the space had heretofore been unusable for two reasons. The first was that it had been used for storage and was full of clutter that made its use by the public impossible. The second was that the space was not tall enough for legal use by the public. The floor would need to be lowered by 18 inches to bring the space up to code, at which point the plan was to utilize the space for a Community room, offices, and storage space.

On February 21, the New Foundations campaign kicked off with a work party to clean out the library's basement. Over 50 people showed up to help with this first stage of the project, including members of Winsted Rotary, the Colebrook Lions, the Junior Friends of the Library, Northwest Community Bank, Corey Construction, Winsted Firefighters, the Winsted Area Public Daycare Center, and the Explorations Charter School. The group made such quick work of the project that what was expected to be a four-hour task was completed in only about 54 minutes.

The capital campaign also looked to be off to a swift start. By the end of March, 70% of the needed funds had been raised, but this initial enthusiasm soon slowed. Nonetheless, by the end of April, the campaign stood at 87% of its overall goal. The campaign was helped along on March 28 by a library fundraiser held at the Cinerom Movieplex in Mallory Brook Plaza with showings of *Field of Dreams* and *The Adventures of Milo and Otis*.

Another boost was provided by the Library's Centennial celebration, which was held on July 11. The celebration marked one hundred years since the opening of the Memorial Library building and featured refreshments and special programs including live chamber music, a display of Northwestern Connecticut Indian Stone Tools, and for the children: a raptor program, puppet show, and drop-in craft. Naturally, a history of the library was also presented by Mary Pitt and Newman Hall, who at that time were running the Local History and Genealogy Room.

The campaign successfully reached its goal by the end of 1998, but the project was met with delay the following year due to a rise in the cost of the work. The lowest bid for the project had come in at about \$500,000 – almost \$50,000 more than what had been raised. A contributing factor to the cost was the uncertainty of what lay beneath the existing basement floor. There would be no way to tell until the work was started whether the foundation would be easy to dig out or whether there would be boulders that would

have to be broken up and removed. This uncertainty was part of the elevated price, so it was decided to isolate this unknown factor by splitting the project into two phases. The first would entail digging out the basement and could start right away. The second phase would include everything else to refinish the basement, and since phase 1 needed to be completed before phase 2 could start, time had been gained in which the remainder of the needed money could be raised.

Work on the basement finally began in February of 2000. Rather than dig out the floor by hand, the old external hatchway to the basement, which had been bricked up as part of the 1986 addition, was opened up and two small excavators were lowered down. The basement was almost completely gutted, including complete removal of the wooden partitions that had divided the space and all the bathroom fixtures. The old set of granite stairs which had led down to the old hatchway were also removed. In order to open up the space and ease the excavation process, existing support columns were moved to the edges of the rooms and in their place steel support beams were installed to support the ceiling and first floor. As the excavators worked to drop the floor, the boilers and oil tanks were also relocated to other areas of the basement where they would be out of the way. By the end of April, phase 1 was completed.

While the New Foundations project was creating something new in the basement, something old returned to the Beardsley library in August of 2002. The Gilbert Regulator clock, which had belonged to the Beardsley library for over 100 hundred years, returned to its rightful place in the library's main foyer. The clock had been purchased on February 21, 1900 by Mary Hinsdale and donated to the library.

At a cost of \$13.50, it was a relatively expensive, high-end clock, and it served the library faithfully for many decades. In the 1960s, all the internal working parts had been removed so the clock could be electrified. In theory, this should have made the clock more reliable, but in the 1980s, it stopped working and went into storage in the genealogy room. At the beginning of 2000, the clock was entrusted to Melvin Brown of Burlington, who spent the next 18 months doing a complete restoration on the piece of Winsted history, removing the electric components and re-installing a period-accurate weight-driven mechanism. The clock continues to grace the library lobby to this day, although it is noticeably not functioning again.

About a year after the clock's return, the renovations to the basement were completed. The floor had been lowered by 18 inches, and the library now had the use of a community room for programs and meetings, a staff kitchen, new office space, and the Frank Smith Literary Room. The latter was named for Frank Smith, whose background in construction prompted him to volunteer his services as clerk-of-the-works for the basement project. He did this in the



Frank Smith, as pictured in the Republican American, February 15, 2002

knowledge that he had been diagnosed with cancer and that the time he dedicated to the project was some of his precious last. He passed away on February 14, 2002 – over a year before the completion of the project. In his

memory, the room in the basement was named for him. This room was the new home of the history and biography collection which, having been moved out of its room on the second floor, allowed for the expansion of the children's room – and eventually the creation of the teen room almost a decade later.

In April 2005, the recurring specter of financial difficulty again returned to Beardsley. Due to the inability of the town to pass a budget, the library was forced to reduce its hours by one-fourth from 38 hours per week down to 28 hours per week. This resulted in the library being closed on Thursdays for a time – and even required dipping into the endowment to keep the institution functioning.

Fortunately, this reduction in services proved to be only temporary, and by the fall of 2005, the library was able to enjoy the completion of a project which had begun the previous year. In an effort to record the rapidly fading memories of the 1940s and '50s, the library began collecting oral histories from those who had lived through the Second World War and the Flood of 1955. This provided an opportunity to record first-hand experiences of events that had direct and significant impacts on the Winsted community and to preserve those stories for future generations. On November 12, 2005, the new community room in the basement was put to use as an exhibit space where the collected stories as well as related artifacts and the veterans themselves were all available for the public to interact with and learn from. The oral histories themselves and related photos are now available for researchers to access in the Virginia Leighton Local History Room.

Further physical improvements to the library were made in 2006. Exterior improvements were made obviously necessary when water infiltrated the basement in May of that

year, leaving portions of the newly renovated space under up to two inches of water. In response, a project was undertaken to rework the sidewalks and outdoor ramps to help angle rainwater run-off away from the building.

At around the same time, work began on a renovation of the main circulation area and the reading room. The renovation included a new circulation desk and a fireplace mantle, both constructed by Antonio Guidon of Norfolk. The mantle bore the name of Brian J. O'Neil, in whose honor the renovated reading room was dedicated and named. O'Neil had been the President of the Library Board from 1997 until his sudden and untimely passing in 2004 at the age of 50. He had guided the library through the basement renovation and was well liked and thought of by the library community.

Smaller changes followed in the succeeding years: the installation of wireless internet in 2007, the return of book delivery for home-bound patrons in 2008, a campaign to raise \$7,400 for a new microfilm machine in 2009, and the launching of the library catalog online so that patrons could access it remotely from home in 2010.

January of 2015 brought the completion of renovations to the second floor, including the children's, teen, and genealogy rooms. The renewal of the rooms had been made possible through several generous contributions from Northwest Community Bank, the Brian O'Neil Fund, the estate of former board president Virginia Leighton, and the Draper Foundation Fund. The last of these contributions was likely the reason that the Teen Room was dedicated as the Draper Memorial Room.

Jim and Shirley Draper had been residents of Colebrook toward the end of their life, and they took great interest in the welfare of the community. Jim had served in the military in World War II and the Korean War and, upon leaving the

military in 1965, subsequently built his fortune in real estate, insurance, and other ventures. Around the time Shirley died in 2000, Jim started the Jim and Shirley Draper Fund as a way to distribute his remaining wealth to local non-profit organizations. The Beardsley Library is one of 19 organizations that were designated by Jim Draper to receive a regular donation from the fund, and so it is especially fitting that a room should be named for him and his wife here at the library.

The library continued to operate smoothly, expanding the parking lot later that year, and redoing the front patio area in 2019, but like all institutions, the library met with difficulty in 2020. The shutdown of much of the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic caused Beardsley to seek ways to adapt to a world where in-person interaction was not possible. During this time, like many libraries, Beardsley began offering curbside pickup.

Restrictions began to lift in 2021, and Beardsley was able to slide back into a normal swing, which was good, because its 150th anniversary was just around the corner.

The Beardsley 150 celebration consisted of a series of events which occurred throughout the year. Souvenirs such as ornaments were sold to raise funds for the celebration and library, and a booklet on the history of the library was offered to patrons for free.

Celebratory events included a historical talk on the history of the library in April, a set of presentations about life in Winchester, Barkhamsted and Colebrook in 1874 by the town historians of the three towns, and an author talk by Peter Vermilyea about his book *Litchfield County in the Civil War*. The anniversary culminated in a celebration held on September 29th at the Little red Barn Brewery with food,

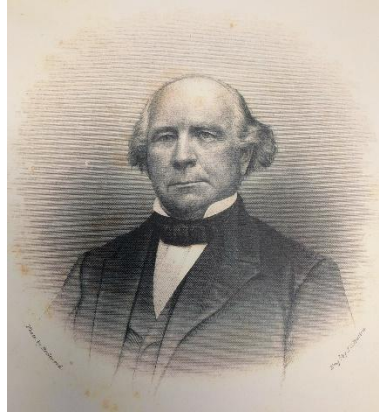
drink, live music, door prizes, a trivia scavenger hunt, and more.

Reaching the milestone of 150 years is not something to be taken lightly – especially for an institution which has been dependent throughout its existence on funding from generous patrons and cash-strapped public officials. Through crises of funding, space, and natural disasters, the Beardsley Library has managed to not only function, but to continuously evolve to meet the constantly shifting needs of a rapidly changing world and a growing community. Today, as household technology makes information ever easier to attain and more people than ever seem to be questioning the necessity of public libraries, the creative and energetic staff of the Beardsley Library continues the tradition of dedicated community service started by Delia Rockwell Beardsley and Louise Carrington in 1874. Through them, Beardsley library is well positioned to continue on for the next 150 years – and hopefully beyond.

Sketches of Notable People:

Deacon Elliot Beardsley

Elliot Beardsley was born in Huntington, Connecticut in 1801. His family lived there for a time before moving to South Britain, Connecticut, where he probably married his first wife, Patty Johnson, in 1832. Together they had two children: John, who passed away before reaching adulthood, and Martha, who later in life became an avid supporter of the library named for her father.



Patty died shortly after Martha's birth, and in 1838 Elliot married Delia Rockwell. By 1840 the couple had moved to Delia's hometown of Winsted where Elliot went into business with Theodore Hinsdale, who owned a scythe factory on Lake Street. Beardsley eventually bought out Hinsdale and renamed the company "The Beardsley Scythe Co." During that time, he used the money he made from the scythe company to build the Beardsley House Hotel on the corner of Lake and Main Streets, which provided further income for him. In 1856, Beardsley joined with James Alvord to acquire the Empire Knife Company. Throughout his time in Winsted, Elliot Beardsley became very well-known and respected and served as Director and President of the Winsted Bank, an officer and Deacon of the Second Congregational Church, and a representative and senator in the Connecticut General Assembly. He died in Winsted on January 19, 1871 at the age of 69.

Delia Rockwell Beardsley



Delia Rockwell was born on January 16, 1811 in Winsted to Alpha and Rhoda Rockwell. Her father was one of three brothers who came to Winsted around 1800 and started a successful iron forge and foundry, resulting in the making of a significant family fortune. Delia married Elliot Beardsley on March 28, 1838, and together they had six children, five of which lived to adulthood: Edward R., Theodore H., Cornelia, Sarah, and Julia. When Elliot passed away in 1871, Delia wanted to do something in his memory and eventually settled on founding a library in his name. She gave \$10,000 to get it started and also guaranteed a rent-free home for the library in the Beardsley Block which she had inherited from her husband. She died on the 19 of March, 1878 at the age of 67.

Jenison J. Whiting

J.J. Whiting was born on January 9, 1818 in Guilford, New York. When he was young, his family moved to Norfolk, where he eventually inherited the family farm. He worked in several businesses in Winsted including at a foundry and in the flour & feed business, eventually owning his own hardware and variety stores



and becoming a partner in a soap and candle factory. In 1842, he married Sarah J. Spaulding of Norfolk, but none of their children survived childhood and Sarah herself died in 1869. In 1870, he married Mary Phelps, with whom he shared the rest of his life.

His generosity was well known in town: He had donated books to the Gilbert Home shortly after it opened to establish a small library there and in 1867, when the Camp block was damaged by fire, he offered rent-free space in his hardware store to the effected merchants. In 1891, he purchased the John T. Rockwell property on the corner of Main Street and Munro Place as the first step in the construction of a new library building for Winsted. Construction on the building started only a couple months before he passed away on October 22, 1897.

Mary Phelps Whiting:

Mary Phelps was born on December 16, 1836 in Norfolk, Connecticut to William C. Phelps and Parney Cowles Phelps. She graduated from Mount Holyoke Seminary in South Hadley, Massachusetts and afterward spent some time as a teacher in private schools in southern Ohio and Winsted. She married J.J. Whiting in 1870. After her husband died in 1897, she saw to the completion of the library building he had started – spending her own money inherited from him to cover unexpected expenses. She also donated neighboring land to provide space for future expansion. She died on March 11, 1914. The Library was closed in her honor during her funeral services.

Edwy E. Benedict (*Architect of the Memorial Library*)

Edwy Ethelbert Benedict was born in Huntington, Connecticut on April 29, 1857, the son of Rev. Amos M. and Emily M. Benedict.

According to one biography of him, he left home at the age of 22 in 1879 with \$1.50 in his pocket to pursue training as a carpenter. He found training and spent 14 years as a carpenter and foreman while studying drawing in the evening. During this period, he briefly lived in Winsted before moving to Waterbury in 1885, where he spent the rest of his life.

Once he had become proficient with his drawing, he became an architect and made his living primarily by designing schools, churches, factories, and other buildings. In 1881, he even won 1st place in a contest for the best design of a house costing less than \$800 (it is not known if the house was ever built). Benedict's only known surviving building at the time of this writing is the Memorial Library in Winsted.

He retired from designing and building in 1925 and passed away in January of 1940 at his home in Waterbury.

The Seven Original Trustees

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Vice-President

John T. Rockwell

Recording Secretary and Treasurer

Edward R. Beardsley

Corresponding Secretary

Judge George M. Carrington

Henry Gay

James R. Alvord

Rev. Samuel B. Forbes

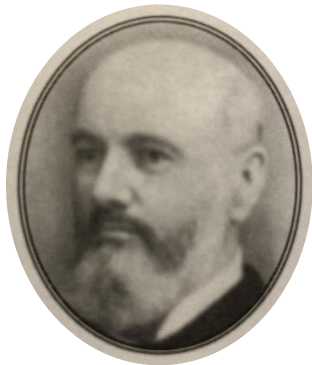
Rev. Leavitt Homan Hallock

Reverend Leavitt Hallock was neither a native of Winsted nor a particularly long-term resident, but his impact was profound. He was born in 1842 in Plainfield, Massachusetts and studied to become a pastor, finally being ordained in Berlin, Connecticut in 1867. He remained in Berlin until 1873 when he came to Winsted and became Pastor of the Second Congregational Church. During his time in Winsted, he quickly became a respected man for his wise counsel, and he made many lifelong friends including Delia Beardsley and Louise Carrington.



Hallock was instrumental in convincing Delia Beardsley to start a library in her husband's honor, and he was appropriately placed on the board of Trustees and elected the first President of the Library Board. He capably guided the library through its first decade, which was arguably the most difficult of the organization as it had to lay the foundation for a sustainable institution during a time when library standards had yet to be invented.

In 1883, he resigned from the Board to take a position at Williston Church in Portland, Maine. He died there on September 23, 1921.



John T. Rockwell

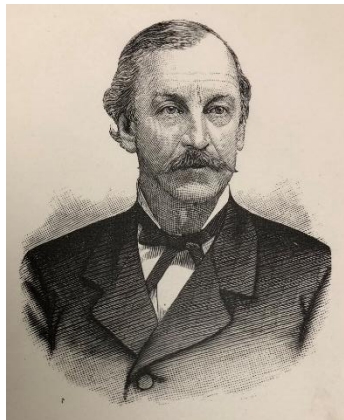
John T. Rockwell was born on January 21, 1827 in Colebrook to Theron Rockwell and Clarissa Treat Rockwell. In 1848, he inherited a share of his father's tannery in Winsted, and three years later he moved to Winsted with his brother James to open an additional operation: a tannery that processed sheep skin for organs and player pianos. Rockwell lived in a house that sat where the Beardsley Library now stands, and one of his tanneries stood just up the hill to the west.

He was one of the original Trustees of the library, but this was only one of many ways he was involved in the community. He was a corporator and president of the Winsted Savings Bank, he was elected one of the first Burgesses of the Winsted Borough in 1858, and he was elected to be Winsted's representative in the Connecticut General Assembly in 1869.

By the late 1880s, Rockwell's tannery had grown so large that it had to move to New Jersey for more space and better access to resources. John's brother James at first managed the business in New Jersey, but when he passed away in 1883, John moved into his brother's house and took over. John continued to serve as a library trustee and was elected President of the Board the following year, although he seldom made the trip from New Jersey to attend Board Meetings. His tenure on the board ended with his resignation shortly before he died on June 13, 1899 at the age of 72.

Henry Gay, 1898 – 1908

Henry Gay was born in Salisbury on April 5, 1834 to Henry Sanford Gay and Mary Reed Gay. His family was by no means wealthy, and so Gay went to work in a local store at a young age and later took a job in the Iron Bank in Falls Village. Seeing better opportunities in Winsted, he moved there in

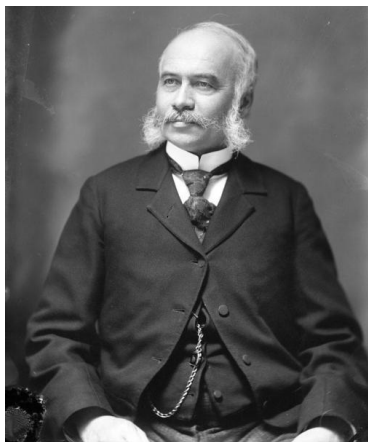


1854 and worked as the bookkeeper in the Winsted Bank – where he eventually worked his way up to become the President of the bank.

With his experience in banking, Gay teamed up with William Gilbert to form the banking firm Gilbert & Gay, which eventually consolidated with the Hurlbut Bank in 1874. Gay eventually became President of this bank as well. With his gathering fortune, he purchased an interest in almost every manufactory in Winsted and used his ever-growing wealth to support local institutions such as the Gilbert Home, of which he was the President. He also served as a

Trustee of the Gilbert School, an incorporator of the Litchfield County Hospital, and helped with the development of Winsted's water system.

He served as a Trustee of the Beardsley Library from 1874 until his passing on May 17, 1908. In total, he served the library for 34 years including 16 as Vice-President and 8 as President.



Judge George M. Carrington

George Carrington, older brother of Librarian Louise Carrington, was born on April 11, 1836 in Hadlyme, Connecticut.

When he came to Winchester as a young man, he took over the insurance agency of Sterling Woodford and had his office in the same building in which J.J. Whiting had his Hardware Store. In addition to managing his insurance business and serving as one of the original Beardsley Trustees, he worked as Winsted's Probate Judge from 1887 to 1906 (when he became too old to hold the position) and as the Probate Clerk from 1906 to 1925 – a total of 38 years in the Probate Office. He also spent nearly 20 years as a member of the Connecticut State Board of Education.

He was elected President of the Beardsley Library Board in 1915 and served until June 6, 1925, when he died from complications from a stroke. Thus passed the last of the original Library Trustees (for both the Beardsley Library and the Memorial Library), and a record-setting career of 51 years on the Library Board.

Edward R. Beardsley

Edward Beardsley was born in 1839 as the son of Elliot and Delia Beardsley. In 1859, he graduated from Yale and soon after married Adelaide Emma Watson, the niece of Henry Gay's wife.

He worked as a secretary for the Connecticut Western Railroad for many years and lived in a house which stood where the YMCA is now on Main Street. In 1881, he sold the house and moved to Hartford, but he continued to carry out his responsibilities as a trustee of the library.

He died in Hartford in 1906 and was replaced on the Library Board by his son, Elliot. Elliot would be the last member of the Beardsley family to serve on the board.

James R. Alvord

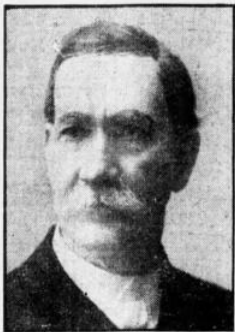
James Alvord was born in Winsted in 1823 to Deacon James H Alvord and Lucy Cook. His father was well-known in the town and heavily involved with Winsted's 1st Congregational Church. He himself later became a founding member and incorporator of the 2nd Congregational Church. On December 3, 1849, he married Mary Eliza Landon, and together they had five children.



He was the business partner of Elliot Beardsley in the ownership of the Empire Knife Company and was responsible for building a new factory on the lake stream coming from Highland Lake and making the decision to change the company's primary product from table knives to pocket

knives. The relationship between Alvord and his business partner was so strong that he named one of his children Eliot Beardsley Alvord. It is therefore not a surprise that Alvord was named one of the original trustees of the Beardsley Library. He passed away on 17 February 1890 at his home in Winsted.

Rev. Samuel B. Forbes



Samuel Forbes was born in Westboro, Massachusetts in 1826. He graduated from Williams College in 1855 and from East Windsor Theological Seminary in 1857.

Due to ill health, Forbes resigned his first pastorate in Manchester only 6 months after having begun. He then began a life in business as a cabinet maker in Burrville and Winsted. Although he had left the pastorate, he remained active with the church and became a major contributor to the local temperance movement. Through this later work, he was credited as the main force behind the shuttering of Winsted's saloons for three years.

In 1867, he married Cornelia Beardsley, daughter of Eliot and Delia Beardsley. She was his third wife after Emily Johnson Guy and Lucy S. Ellsworth. The couple lived in Winsted, having at least two children there: Henry Stuart, born 16 June 1871, and Agnes, born around 1873. In the 1880s, he and his family moved to Hartford, and by the time of Forbes' death in 1913, he and Cornelia were living in the home of their daughter, Agnes, in Minneapolis.

Library Staff

List of Head Librarians and Library Directors

(* = information on that person is included below)

***Louise M. Carrington**, Sept 15, 1874 – Sept 1, 1911 (37 yrs)

***Helena Alford**, 1911 – August 1916 (5 yrs)

***Dorothy Whiting Terrell**, 1916 – 1921 (5 yrs)

***Elizabeth A Tiffany**, 1921 – 1948 (27 yrs)

***Rachel Phillips**, 1948 – 1952 (4 yrs)

***Mary T. Morse**, 1952 – 1956 (4 yrs)

***Ann Holmes Wise**, 1956 – 1968 (12 yrs)

***Hazel Johnstone**, 1969 – 1986 (17 yrs)

Mary Ann Werner, 1986 – 1995 (9 yrs)

Ruth Backhaus, 1995 – 1997 (2 yrs)

Celeste Fallon Smith, 1997 – 1998 (10 mo)

Mary Lee Bulat, 1998 – 2007 (9 yrs)

Linda Senkus, 2007 – 2011 (4 yrs)

Karin Goodell, 2011 – 2021 (10 yrs)

Mackenzie Griffin, 2022 – 2023 (1 yr)

Kimmie Killmer, 2023 -

Louise M. Carrington

Louise Carrington was born on June 30, 1840 in Hadlyme, Connecticut. Her father, Reverend George Carrington, was pastor of the Congregational Church in Hadlyme and her mother, Catherine Marsh Carrington, was a native of Winchester and daughter of Reverend Frederick Marsh.



Louise and her brother George were living in Winsted by 1874, when she was hired as Librarian of the Beardsley Library and he was appointed to the Library's Board of Trustees. Her time as librarian over the next 37 years was instrumental in setting the standards by which the library would operate. Her wisdom in the decisions she made and the recommendations she offered to the trustees was essential to the success of the library, and her careful use of limited resources made it possible for the library to survive periods of deep financial difficulty.

She threw herself completely into her work, rarely missing a day at the Library and extending her library activities far beyond Winchester's borders. In 1891, she was one of 26 librarians that gathered in the director's room of the New Haven Free Public Library to discuss the creation of a state library organization. The result of that meeting was the founding of the Connecticut Library Association (CLA), for which she was elected as one of their many Vice-Presidents.

By the time her career ended with her retirement in 1911, she had held every office in the CLA except president and had become the most senior librarian in Connecticut in terms of length of service – having served at the Beardsley

Library for 37 years and two months. She passed away only a few years later on October 2, 1918 at the age of 78.

Helena Alford

Helena Alford was born in Winsted on Christmas Day 1883 to George H. Alford and Jennie Kellogg Alford. Upon Graduating from Smith College, she worked as a librarian in New York City. In 1911, she was hired to be Louise Carrington's successor at the Beardsley Library, but she only stayed for about five years. In 1916, she left Beardsley to take a job working the information desk at the Hartford Public Library, and in June 1929 she moved again to take a job at the Public Library in Buffalo, New York. She spent the rest of her life there, retiring in 1949 and passing away on March 3, 1964.



Dorothy Whiting

Dorothy Whiting was born to Winsted residents Julius and Elizabeth Whiting on September 22, 1893. Not much is known about her early life until she got her first job at the Brooklyn Public Library in New York. She only worked there a couple years before returning to Winsted and becoming the Head Librarian at the Beardsley Library in 1916. She continued in that role until 1921, when she married Col. Henry S. Terrell of Colebrook.

She remained active in the local community, eventually becoming President of the Winchester Historical Society and Regent of the Greenwoods Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. In 1927 she became a librarian at the Norfolk library and worked there for nearly 30 years

until her retirement in 1955. She passed away in Torrington on September 8, 1975.

Elizabeth Tiffany

Elizabeth Tiffany was born on February 11, 1889 in Barkhamsted, the daughter of Dwight B Tiffany and Emeline Vosberg. She graduated from the Gilbert School in 1906 and subsequently attended Smith College before returning to Winsted where her father was running a lumber, coal and masonry supply company called the Tiffany & Pickett Co. In 1912, she was hired as an Assistant Librarian at the Beardsley Library and even though she only initially agreed to the job on a temporary basis, she stayed for 36 years, becoming Head Librarian in 1921.

Outside of the library, she was involved with the Greenwoods chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Winsted Women's Club. She was also a very active member of the Second Congregational Church for over 60 years where she served as the pianist for the Sunday School and spent 25 years as the church's financial secretary.

She retired from the library in 1948 and passed away on November 4, 1965 in Litchfield. Among those surviving her were her sister-in-law Helen Gaylord Tiffany, who was a library Trustee, and her niece Virginia Tiffany Leighton, who would later become a notable President of the Library Board and listed her aunt as one of her inspirations for her involvement.



Mabel White

Mabel White was born in Winsted in 1882 to Albert and Selena White. She graduated from the Gilbert School in 1901, and by 1910 she was working as the bookkeeper at Highland Lake Farm – her family's dairy farm on Winchester Center Road.

She started working as an Assistant Librarian at the Beardsley Library in 1917 and continued in that role for 46 years until her retirement in 1963. She still holds the record of the longest serving Librarian at Beardsley.

Rachel Phillips

Rachel Phillips was born in Torrington or New Hartford on February 14, 1921 to Ray Phillips and Louise Blakeslee. She grew up in New Hartford and graduated from the Gilbert School in 1939. She was the first Beardsley Head Librarian to have formal training as a librarian, which she received from the Springfield Public Library Training School in Springfield, Massachusetts. Upon returning to the Winsted area after her training, she spent a few years in the early 1940s as an assistant librarian at the Gilbert School. She bounced around to a couple other libraries before coming to Beardsley as Head Librarian in 1948. In 1951 she married Elliott Chatfield of Simsbury. A year later, she left Beardsley, having only worked there for four years. In 1961, she got a job working as a librarian in the Simsbury school district and worked there for 18 years, retiring in 1979. She passed away three years later on July 30, 1982.

Mary T. Morse

Mary Morse was born around 1925 to Harry B. Morse and Marcella Scanlon. Her father owned an electrical supply business before becoming Sheriff of Litchfield County. By 1950, Mary was working as a high school librarian in Litchfield. She began working at the Beardsley Library in 1952 and stayed until shortly after her marriage to Dennis Hayes in 1956. She passed away at the young age of 45 in 1971.



Ann Holmes Wise

Ann Louise Holmes was born in Springfield, Missouri on September 3, 1898, the daughter of Loomis Hoyt Holmes and Anne C. Hoover Holmes. While living out west, her family vacationed for several summers at Highland Lake. She loved the area so much that she decided to stay one winter and attend the Gilbert School. She later graduated from Mount Holyoke College. She married Huber Wise in Chicago on June 4, 1941, and from there the couple went to live on the west coast for several years before moving to Winsted sometime around 1944. She worked as the Executive Secretary for the Winsted Chapter of the Red Cross for about ten years until her retirement in 1954.

She spent her retirement working as the Librarian at the Beardsley Library. During her time at Beardsley, circulation doubled, and she drastically increased the library's offerings by arranging to borrow books from the Hartford Books Center and she established the circulation of 50 vinyl records

gifted to the library by RCA Records. Having made a very positive mark, she retired from the library in 1968. She passed away only a year and a half later on July 4, 1970.



Hazel Johnstone

Hazel Johnstone was born Hazel Smith on March 2, 1912 in New York. When she was 5, she contracted Polio and spent a full year in bed recuperating. Her mother, who was a nurse, tended to her until she was able to walk with leg braces. By age 9 she no longer needed the braces and was able to lead a normal life, but her brush with the disease

would have unfortunate effects later in life.

Her first career involved working in the publishing industry as a proofreader and copy reader for Doubleday Publishers and Prentice-Hall. In 1962, she began working at Beardsley and became one of the founding members of the Friends of the Beardsley Library in 1970. She became Head Librarian in 1969 and during her tenure started children's story hours, organized book delivery for "shut-ins" and participated in the planning and execution of the 1985 building addition. By 1986, she was suffering from Post-Polio Syndrome, which was affecting her muscles and mobility, and so she was forced to retire from the library. Less than a year later, the syndrome had confined her to a wheelchair. She passed away on October 18, 1991. In her memory, the library staff donated a projection screen and the Friends of the Library paid for a study carrel in her memory.

Mary Pitt, 1980 – 1999

Mary Pitt was not a head librarian, but her time working for the Beardsley Library was distinguished none the less. She was born Mary Worman on May 6, 1916 in Nutley, New Jersey. She grew up in Bridgeport and eventually graduated from Miami University in Ohio. In 1939, she moved to Winsted and soon after started working as a Home Economics teacher at the Gilbert School. In 1943, she married Hamilton Pitt, a fellow teacher at Gilbert who taught History and English. She later left Gilbert to teach Home Economics at Northwestern Region 7. In 1980, she retired from teaching and began working at the Beardsley Library, where her passion for genealogy led her to work in the Genealogy room. She became a fixture there, happily helping patrons with their family research and notably starting the Winsted Notebook binders which today are an indispensable resource for local history research. In 1999, at the age of 83, she retired from Beardsley and moved to Wallingford where she passed away on September 6, 2006.



Presidents and Trustees

List of Presidents of the Board of Trustees

(* = information on that person is included below)

Rev. Leavitt Homan Hallock, 1874 – 1884 (10 yrs)

John T. Rockwell, 1884 – 1898 (14 yrs)

Henry Gay, 1898 – 1908 (10 yrs)

***Sidney F. Dickerman, 1908 – 1914 (6 yrs)**

Judge George M. Carrington, 1915 – 1925 (10 yrs)

***Dudley L. Vaill, 1926 – 1939 (14 yrs)**

***Edward P. Jones, 1939 – 1954 (15 yrs)**

***Elbert Manchester, 1954 - 1968 (14 yrs)**

***Roderick B. Jones, 1969 – 1973 (4 yrs)**

Caroline W. Nash, 1974 (1 yr)

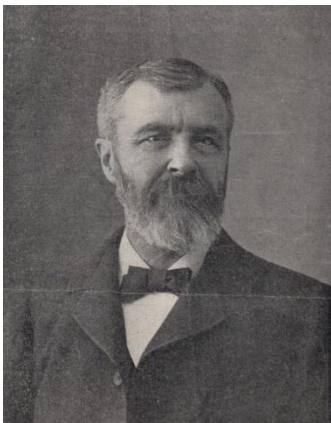
Bart Johnson, 1975 – 1977 (2 yrs)

Joseph Lavieri, Jr., 1978 – 1985 (7 yrs)

***Virginia T. Leighton, 1985 – 1996 (11 yrs)**

***Brian O'Neil, 1997 – 2004 (7 yrs)**

Louise Van Alstyne, 2004 -



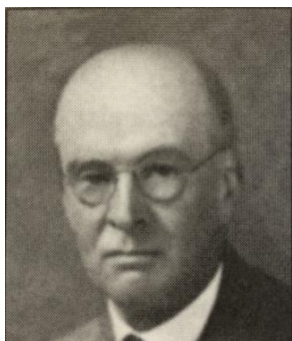
Sidney F. Dickerman, 1908 – 1914

Sidney F. Dickerman was the first Board President that had not been one of the original seven Trustees. He was born September 30, 1835 in Guilford, Chenango County, New York to Nathaniel Dickerman and Mary Ann Stebbins Dickerman. He spent much of his first 30 years

moving around New York, Illinois, and Ohio finding work at various times as a farmer, a bookkeeper, and a teacher. During this time, he served in the Civil War as a member of the 150th Ohio Infantry.

After the war, he came to Winsted and purchased an interest in J.J. Whiting's hardware store and sealed the deal by marrying Whiting's niece, Adelaide Lucinda Whiting, in 1867. Eventually, Dickerman came to own Whiting's Hardware store and reorganized it as the Dickerman & Pond Company, of which he was the secretary and treasurer.

He joined the Beardsley Library Trustees in 1897, filling the seat left vacant by the passing of Augustus H. Fenn, and was elected President in 1908. He served six years in that role until he died on February 22, 1914. He left \$1,000 to the library in his will.



Dudley L. Vaill

Dudley Vaill was born on August 30, 1873 in Winsted to Theodore F. Vaill and Alice M. Dudley Vaill. His father was the editor of the *Winsted Herald* and his mother was the daughter of George Dudley, who owned the very successful George Dudley & Son, Co. tannery.

He graduated from Yale in 1896 and returned to Winsted to work in the family tannery business, eventually becoming treasurer of the company in 1898. He had a passion for everything local and became involved in everything from the Gilbert Home and the Winsted Savings Bank to the Greenwoods Country Club (of which he was a founder) and the Winchester Historical Society. He is noted for his writing

of *The County Regiment* – a history of the Second Connecticut Heavy Artillery, in which unit his father served during the Civil War.

Vaill was first elected to the Library Board in 1906 and served continuously until his death in 1967, making him the longest serving Trustee to date with 61 years to his credit. During that time, he spent 14 years as President. When he passed away on October 8, 1967, he was 94 years old.

Edward P. Jones



Edward Payson Jones was born on April 2, 1866 in Barkhamsted to Edward Pitkin Jones and Mary G. Coult Jones. He graduated from the Williston Academy in Easthampton, Massachusetts in 1886 and then came back to Winsted to join his brother Elijah in the furniture and undertaking business. Edward took over the business in 1896 and in 1893 he became the first secretary of the State Board of Examiners and Embalmers.

Much of Jones' money came from his purchase in 1897 of the Winsted Steam Laundry, which he continued to operate for the next 50 years. During that time, he also served on the Winsted Chamber of Commerce and as a Director of the Hurlbut National Bank.

Among his many volunteer activities in the community, he was Deacon Emeritus of the Second Congregational Church, a charter member of the Rotary Club, a member of the Litchfield County Choral Union, and a 32nd degree mason with Saint Andrew's Lodge. His abundant generosity is shown by the many contributions he made to the Library, of which he was made a Trustee and President in 1939 – the

same year the Beardsley and Memorial Libraries were consolidated. It was the donation of his comprehensive Genealogy library that started the Genealogy Room that now bears his name in 1948, and he continued to contribute money towards the expansion of the collection in the following years. He also paid to have repairs completed on the second floor of the library building to make usable space for the Art Room.

When he died on November 9, 1953 at Litchfield County Hospital, he left behind a lasting legacy on the Beardsley Library and Winsted as a whole. Part of that legacy was his son, Roderick, who took over management of the Genealogy Room after his father's passing and would also become a Trustee and President of the Library.

Elbert Manchester

Elbert Manchester was born in Winsted on October 12, 1906. He graduated from the Gilbert School in 1924, Bowdoin College in 1930, and The University of Michigan Law School in 1934. A year later, he married Eleanor Jones of New Hartford, who, over the next few years, would work as a librarian at both the Gilbert School and the Beardsley Library – perhaps influencing her husband's decision to join library's Board of Trustees in 1939. Upon his return to Winsted in 1937, he set up his own law practice which he continued until his death. He additionally served as Winsted's State Representative (1939 – 1942), Judge of Probate (1942 – 1950), and Judge of the municipal court in the 1950s.

In 1949, Manchester replaced his uncle, Dudley Manchester, on the Board of Trustees of the Gilbert School. He remained a lifelong fan of the Gilbert sports teams and an advocate for increased spending on education. He was also

an active member of the board of the Winchester Historical Society and the Board of Directors of the Winsted Hospital.

He served as a trustee of the library for 52 years, making him the second-longest serving trustee after Dudley Vaill. After leading a very active life, he passed away on August 21, 1995 in Rockville, Maryland.

Roderick B. Jones

Roderick B. Jones was the son of Edward Payson Jones and Frances Isabella Bronson Jones. He was born on October 13, 1898 in Winsted and graduated from the Gilbert School in 1916. He then attended Yale, graduating from there in 1921, and then went to MIT where he earned a PhD in chemistry and physics. He also earned a Law Degree from Yale Law School and subsequently set up a patent law practice in New York.

He served in both World Wars, as a Private in the Army during World War I and as a Lt. Commander in the Navy during the Second World War. In Winsted, he served as Treasurer of the Winchester Historical Society and as a Director for the Winsted Memorial Hospital and the Winsted Chapter of the American Red Cross.

Upon his father's death in 1954, he was elected to fill his seat on the Board of Trustees of the Beardsley Library. He also took on his father's responsibilities caring for the Genealogy Collection and was elected President of the Board in 1969. He himself passed away on March 25, 1974 at Winsted Memorial Hospital.



Virginia T. Leighton

Virginia Tiffany Leighton was born in Winsted on February 11, 1918, the daughter of Ralph V. Tiffany and Helen Gaylord Tiffany. Her aunt was Elizabeth Tiffany, Beardsley Library's fourth Librarian, and so much of Virginia's childhood was spent in the library she would later help manage as a trustee. She even spent some of her high school years working as an assistant librarian under her aunt's guidance.

She graduated from Middlebury College in 1940 and married L. Franklin Leighton, Jr. in 1946. In 1960, she joined the Torrington Civic Symphony as a cellist and later became that organization's historian. Her passion for history was well represented in her activities as a supporter and Trustee of the Beardsley Library where she was instrumental in the promotion and expansion of the Genealogy and Local History collection. She was a main force behind the push to have the 1985 library addition include new space for that collection, and in recognition of that, the new room was named in her honor.

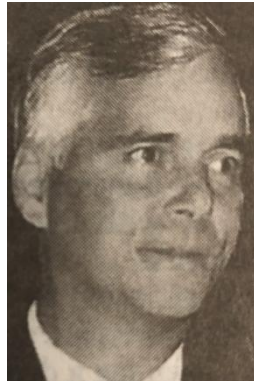
She was elected President of the Board in 1985, as the library addition was under construction. Her time in office included overseeing the conclusion of that project and also the upgrading of the library's audiovisual equipment and an expansion of library activities for both children and adults.

In 2000, her years of energetic service to Beardsley Library was recognized with the Award of Appreciation by the Association of Connecticut State Library Boards. She

remained on the Beardsley Board up until her passing on January 13, 2013 at the age of 94.

Brian O'Neil

Brian O'Neil was born on May 5, 1954 in Winsted. He went to school locally at Saint Anthony's School and the Gilbert School before embarking on a business career that saw him in management positions at Hitchcock Chair Company and the Winsted Savings Bank before becoming Vice President of Key Air, Inc. and President of Keystone Aviation Services, Inc.



Elsewhere in the community he was not only the President of the Beardsley Library Board of Trustees, but also helped create the Oxford Economic Development Corporation and was a Director of the Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce and member of the Winchester Council Knights of Columbus, the Rotary Club of Winsted, and the Winsted Lodge of Elks – among many other organizations.

He was generally modest and not outspoken about his achievements, but his energetic involvement in so many areas of Winsted life won him the respect and admiration of the community. He passed away unexpectedly of a heart attack in 2004 at the age of 50. In 2006, the library's circulation area and reading room were renovated and the latter was named in his honor.

Transcriptions of Documents
Pertaining to the Beardsley Library's History

The Winsted Herald

January 6, 1893

THE LAMP EXPLODED

The Beardsley Block Guttred by Fire - \$15,000 Damage

At about 5 o'clock Tuesday night, young Joseph Franz, clerk at H.C. Price's grocery store, went into the cellar, with a lighted lamp to draw kerosene. He had no sooner reached the cellar bottom than the lamp exploded, and the sawdust with which the floor was covered, being situated with oil in the vicinity of the barrels, ignited, and in an instant the cellar was filled with fire and smoke. The boy ran panting up the stairs and told his employer what had happened, and at the same instant the smoke came pouring up through the floor. Mr. Price and Dr. Provost, who chanced to be in the store, at once started for the spot with water pails filled from the sink, but it was quickly seen that more stringent measures must be adopted, and Dr. Provost rushed across the street, to the Second church and rang the alarm. The promptness with which the fire department responded, and the celerity with which the boys located their apparatus, was noteworthy. Union hose company, No. 1, was the first on the spot, assistant foreman Bert Griswold taking charge till the arrival of Foreman Hubby. They connected with hydrants near Munro street, near the post office and the south side of Beardsley House. The hydrants were somewhat affected by frost, and considerable time elapsed before the water could be turned on. Meantime the fire was making fierce headway in the store cellar and smoke issued from the windows in dense clouds. When the water was turned on, it was a matter of impossibility to play it on the flames owing to the suffocating smoke in the cellar and the peculiar location of the fire. When it broke through the floor and crawled up the walls and spread

itself all through the splendid brick block, however, there were targets enough for the streams of the firemen.

Deluge hose No. 2 lost no time in getting to the scene and connected with the Lake street hydrant and also with the fire steamer which arrived at about the same time and took its station on the opposite side of Mad River back of the burning block, dropping its feed pipe into the river. On this, the rear side of the block, the flames could be seen through the windows, crawling through the building.

It was but a short time after the fire started, when five barrels of kerosene oil, which had been put in the same day, exploded in the cellar and intensified the fierceness of the fire, and a second alarm was sent out, binging the entire department to the spot. Niagara hose, No. 3 and Cascade No. 4 supplemented the efforts of their comrades and did heroic service. Streams were played on the building from both front and rear, the firemen in the rear standing hip-deep in Mad River.

Rescue hook and ladder came to the front of the building and set about removing the property of the tenants on the upper floors, assisted by a considerable corps of volunteer rescuers. The rooms of Mrs. E.P. Hopkins were quickly cleared of all their contents, including an upright piano, which was carried down the stairs and deposited on the ground across the street.

There was a constant procession of men and women carrying articles of furniture, bedding, clothing, etc. through the mid air passage ways connecting the second, third and fourth stories oof the block with the Beardsley House, and the hotel office and parlors were piled thick with these articles.

At about six o'clock the fire was making such stubborn headway against the most energetic work of the firemen that it was predicted by many that the building was doomed to total destruction, and it was plain that if the block should go, no power could save the Beardsley House. Then it was that many of the boarders at the hotel looked solemn and some began to remove their belongings from their rooms. Trunks were hastily packed and dragged through the office and out onto the

sidewalks, and carpets were ripped up in the upper halls of the hotel, where also much of the property of the block's tenants was stored until they resembled a furniture ware-room.

Many of the ladies became exceedingly nervous and excited, but some retained their composure admirably in the midst of the excitement. Landlord Spencer, although he lost \$600 worth of furniture, etc., in the block, and was apparently threatened with utter ruin, was as cool as a cucumber throughout, and did much to allay the apprehensions of his guests.

So rapid was the work of the flames and so stifling the smoke from the blazing kerosene that it was impossible to enter the stores on the ground floor of the block for purposes of rescue....

Ladders were raised from the bed of Mad river, to windows on first and second floors and windows smashed to enable the firemen to play their streams upon the flames, and the whole of Mad River was pumped through the steamer into the burning building. Notwithstanding, the fire obstinately refused to be vanquished, and seemed determined to explore every corner of the structure.

The Beardsley Library which is located on the second floor in the west end of the block seemed doomed to ruin, by water if not by fire, and it was deemed advisable to remove the books, 6,500 volumes of which were carried across the street and stored in the chapel. About all the books in the library were rescued, but are littered in such chaotic confusion in their temporary quarters that it will be an endless task for the librarian to rearrange them, properly classified.

At one time, observers at the rear of the building could see three floors apparently a seething mass of flames from top to bottom, but the steady, valiant work of the fire fighters, told in the end, and at nine o'clock the fire was so far under control as to warrant Chief Engineer Burnes in relieving some of the men and sending some of the apparatus to their headquarters.

Address

At the Opening of the Memorial Library Building

Winsted – Conn. – July 1, 1898

By George M. Carrington

This place has been fortunate in the last 25 years in the number and amount of benefactions it has received from public spirited citizens. Not referring now to such matters as the building of churches or denominational institutions of any kind, of which this place has its full share and which are second to none in value and importance, the feeling in the mind of those, to whom more or less of wealth has been entrusted by the great Giver, that something of that received from the community should be returned for its good, has grown and increased of late years. Some of the benefactors are the following: Gift of Mrs. Delia R. Beardsley for the Beardsley Library \$10,000 & more; of Henry Gay 1 5/8 acres for a play ground for the Fourth District School, and of the land now owned by the W.L. Gilbert House; of Harvey Wakefield to the town of \$14,000 and more which was wisely turned into our lakeside drive; Mr. Wakefield also gave \$1,000 each [two words ?] five or six public institutions in town; the princely gift of William L. Gilbert in three parts, viz. (1) the Mountain Tunnel, \$48,000 - (2) The William L. Gilbert House of \$482,000 – (3) The Gilbert School of \$602,000 and more; John T. Rockwell, two acres for a Memorial Park; Mrs. Francis Brown and Family towards the Soldiers' Monument about \$13,000 – other people enough to complete it without asking one dollar from the town instead of one half the cost as they had a legal right to; Mrs. Mary A. Mitchell \$2,000 for a fountain in the public park; a general subscription, with two legacies of \$1,000 each from Miss Martha E. Beardsley and Mrs. Mary [Middle and last name?] resulting in the Young Men's Christian Association building & grounds and finally, Mr. & Mrs. Whiting this elegant and useful edifice and the ground around it. I think these beautiful grounds opposite us, although private, are to such an extent available to the public, and bring such real

pleasure to every one that they are worthy of a place in the enumeration.

The pioneer in this honorable list is Mrs. Delia R. Beardsley, born in 1811 on the spot where the Beardsley House now stands. Her father, Alpha Rockwell, was so named because [he was] the first white child born in the adjacent town of Colebrook. With his brother Solomon he conducted an [?] iron and mercantile business which was managed with great success. In due time they were succeeded by the firm of Hinsdale and Beardsley, the untimely death of the former leaving the business in the hands of Mr. Beardsley, who conducted it with the same or greater success during his life. He developed the cutlery and the scythe business; he erected the Beardsley House and kept it a temperance hotel as long as he lived; he was president of the Winsted Bank; a deacon in the church; a member of both houses of the legislature and at his death left the largest estate on the records of the Probate Court. He was a leader in every good work, albeit in a quiet way, a man of profuse but unostentatious beneficence, and when he died, the town suffered one of its heaviest losses. In his memory his wife conceived and put into operation the plan of a library for the benefit of the Winsted public. She married Mr. Beardsley as a second wife in 1838 and became the mother of six children of whom four survive but only one descendant, Lawrence W. Potter, is now a resident of this place. She was a kind, friendly, capable, large hearted woman charged with heavy responsibilities during the last few years of her husband's life when his mind became clouded, she met and carried them well. Impressed with a desire to be of use to others after she should leave this world, she was led to consider the founding of a public library, and in the Spring of 1874 made and executed a deed of trust, wherein she freely devoted the sum of \$10,000 to seven individuals and their successors with the purpose, as expressed in the 1st article, "to be appropriated exclusively to found and maintain perpetually a public library in the village of West Winsted the same to be known as the Beardsley Library." Other articles provided for the

immediate expenditure of one half the sum within a year in the purchase of books and periodicals; the investment of the remaining \$5,000- the income therefrom to be expended annually in replenishing the library; the use for five years of the room [? just ?], and the furnishing and fitting thereof."

The gentlemen named by Mrs. Beardsley – John T. Rockwell, James R. Alvord, Edward R. Beardsley, L.H. Hallock, S.B. Forbes, Henry Gay and Geo M Carrington accepted the trust, legally organized themselves, elected Rev. L.H. Hallock President, and prepared a series of Rules and Regulations. Mr. Hallock, who had been in close consultation with Mrs. Beardsley, gave much time and thought to selecting the first books, and in all matters was heartily seconded by the other members of the Board. No provision being made for the running expenses of the library, it was necessary to fix a charge for membership, which was done, and on the 15th September 1874 the library of 3025 books was opened, with Miss Louise M. Carrington as Librarian, a large gathering in its room, and a formal address from Rev. Dr. Eldridge of Norfolk.

The opening was on six afternoons and evenings of the week, as it has been ever since. In the selection of books it was the effort to place on the shelves only those books whose tendency was pure, and whose influence healthful, there has been no place for the highly seasoned productions of certain authors, more or less nearly approximating the "dime novel" variety; but there has been no purpose to shut off any books of good character on account of any opinions therein that might be contrary to those of the persons selecting. Of necessity this branch of the library work has been largely left to the librarian, all the trustees are, and have been, busy men whose energies have been taxed to their fullest capacity (and sometimes beyond it) by the exacting demands of their daily duties. It is only the truth to say that the collection has received many complements from persons qualified to judge, as being a well selected assortment.

It should be remembered that it is no easy matter, with limited funds, to look at the vast number of books issuing

annually from the press, and make selection of the few it is possible to have. The demand for fiction is of course greater than for any other books, but only a due proportion of those must be taken. The classified tables of the various kinds of books read must be closely observed. If there is among any number of scholars, clubs, or others a call for the means of studying certain subjects, such books as will furnish them must be forthcoming. No one source of information is sufficient. To illustrate the painstaking care that has been used: the Library Journal (\$5.00 a year) a periodical devoted to suggestions for the efficient working of a library has been taken and carefully studied from the first. The complete set of this work on the shelves is now worth in open market \$150.00. Other reviews and library catalogues and bulletins, and persons having superior facilities for information have been consulted, and from the available mass such selections made as seemed best, with the means [2 words unclear], for the needs and use of the Winsted Public, while respectful heed has been given to suggestions of patrons always welcome.

It is not practicable to give anything like an adequate idea of the available books. How they grew from year to year in the old room, first filling the north side; then the larger half of the south side; then the eight sections in the two alcoves; then two tiers on each of the lower shelves; then the top of the cases; then the coal [or coat?] closet, stacked like cord wood until the daily cry of the agonized soul of the librarian was for more room – more room, is well known to those who have kept informed of the situation. The 3,025 have become 7,900, plus a consignment of books this week received from the [bindery?]. Some of the departments are religion, philosophy, science, poetry, fiction, juvenile, travels, history, biography, literature, cyclopedias, dictionaries, periodicals. In the last are full sets of several of the leading magazines, a department of literature receiving larger attention from the best writers, and an unfailing favorite of old and young. With rare exceptions the entire file of the Winsted Herald is on the shelves – the only available one in

existence, so far as is known. It is impossible in the limits of this paper to give samples from all the departments – the card catalogue now in process of making will faithfully chronicle every book, and to that, as the land conveyances say “reference is hereby made.” From 17 to 20 of the best periodicals are regularly received and placed on the tables of the reading room while fresh, most of them monthly and covering in their range subjects literary, political, art, scientific, general. Perhaps it is a good time to say that with the exception of part of the first year, the Daily Citizen has been regularly received and bound, and is among the valuable items of the library’s equipment, although its issue while fresh is not available to the public. And I will further say that the value of the Herald of former years & the Citizen of today cannot be estimated. They are far and away the most valuable books in the collection, for they are the only existing mirror of the life of this community, and every year increases their value. The librarian tells me that a stranger called one day and asked to examine the file of the Herald. When he had done he courteously expressed his thanks and added that the information he had secured was worth fifty dollars to him.

In the fullest sense of the term, the people have enjoyed the privilege of the library. The very moderate price of tickets has allowed a larger majority of them who really cared to read an opportunity to do so, and in other cases those who have contributed for the expenses have been glad to have tickets go to those who otherwise could not have enjoyed the library’s privileges. There have been instances in which hunger for the books and magazines has been so strong as to command unqualified admiration. Let me give you one: a lad, member of a large family, whose father finally died of wounds received in his country’s service, had at 14 years of age to go to the factory and help earn the family’s daily bread. He earned 50 cents a day, from which his father allowed him 50 cents a month to spend as he liked: in four months he had hoarded a dollar and seventy-five cents and then he borrowed twenty five cents and bought a ticket in the Beardsley Library. Not all have the pluck of this

youth, but he is not the only one whose eyes have shone as they have come into possession of the coveted [?] which has given them the key to the Library's treasures. In another line, two organizations of ladies having more or less leisure have pursued art studies for many years, to increase their knowledge and love of the true the beautiful and the good, but with one accord confessing that their work could not have been done but for the Library's facilities. Scholars, too, have found it possible to secure a larger, broader knowledge of assigned topics. More than one has echoed the remark of a lady after she removed from the state "I miss the Beardsley Library so!"

Will it be hardly fair if I make no allusion to the expense of this institution? It is a trite saying that there is no good thing without cost, and this is no exception. The expenditures are under two divisions, (1) books, and (2) running expenses. Allusion was made to the fact that Mrs. Beardsley directed the investment of \$5,000.00 the income to be used in replacing the books. In the '70s it was not difficult to purchase from Holmes Day, or other, securities that yielded 10 percent interest, and for several years \$500.00 a year was realized. Then came a depression – the rate of interest dropped, and at one time only \$225.00 a year was received. At present, by careful investment and the exemption from taxes which is allowed, the amount available for books is \$328.00 a year. This has to pay for the periodicals, their binding & the rebinding of worn books and for the new books that are bought. The periodicals and binding have cost from \$125 to \$150 a year, leaving from \$175 to \$200 to be expended for new books of all kinds. A little thought will suggest that to suit the varied tastes in a community in due proportions with such a sum is a difficult undertaking, necessitating saying "no" to many desirable works.

The expense account for the first ten years was nearly met from the sale of tickets and from fines, with an occasional special soliciting for a new carpet or additional shelves. Mrs. Beardsley's five years rent free had passed, and with them her own valuable earthly life, and five years more by the kind

sufferance of her heirs. It then seemed to the trustees that it was only fair that rent should be paid for the use of other people's property, and they headed a subscription list for that purpose and to meet a slowly growing shortage of ordinary receipts. Since then the same process has been repeated every year. Miss Martha C. Beardsley who died in 1889 left a thousand dollars to the trustees, the income from which has been of the greatest service in helping meet the annual deficit. Besides this no gift available for financial aid through investment has been made. From \$150 to \$200 a year has been required besides the tickets and fines and Miss Beardsley's bequest and those who have done the work of securing that sum have proved themselves friends indeed of the Winsted reading public. For, only by the amount thus raised, has it been practicable to keep the doors open and make available for readers privileges that have actually cost at least three dollars for every one they have paid.

It seems to me a most hopeful omen that the ladies have taken hold of this day's work so enthusiastically. From the first, they have been the most [?] patrons of this institution. Perhaps it has been waiting all these years for the development of these latent powers. I look for the day, and [?] see signs of its coming, when there shall be a more cordial rallying to the public's needs in this direction. The roll of benefactors first presented, shows us to be all debtors. In the one item of our High School, besides the expense of the building, Mr. Gilbert's gift to the taxpayers of this town is \$12,000 to \$15,000 a year, or \$100.00 for each scholar, or nearly one quarter of our taxes, town and borough. Nobly and well have the Beardsley family done, and we have entered into their labors. Hard it is to refrain from [some expression?] concerning this magnificent gift of Mr. and Mrs. Whiting, but that is for another. Who will hear the call to take up this work and by little or by more, year by year or at once, have the satisfaction of a share in maintaining and carrying on and in filling up the measure of what is will [begin?], and to the goodly list that Winsted already enjoys, add a library free as the air and the sunlight to every man, woman, and child!