



THE HOTCHKISS LIBRARY OF SHARON

10 Upper Main Street • Sharon, CT 06069
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Special Edition Newsletter 2023

WE'RE OPEN!



It Was a Beauty Then, Even Better Now

By Tom Trowbridge
Board President

Completed in 1893, the Library was a gift to the Town of Sharon by Maria Bissell Hotchkiss in memory of her late husband, Benjamin Berkeley Hotchkiss.

Mrs. Hotchkiss, having earlier endowed the Hotchkiss School, chose renowned architect Bruce Price for the project. Price, whose designs include the Chateau Frontenac in Quebec and several buildings in Tuxedo Park and at Yale, used the Romanesque Revival style for the Library. The outer walls are of Stockbridge marble, quarried in Sharon, with interior walls and floors finished in solid oak. Ten stained glass window panels honor classical authors.

Our historic building, though, had serious limitations which, with the passage of time, became increasingly apparent. There was inadequate staff workspace, attendees at popular programs were often crowded together and the interior, never touched up, looked tired. Most important, the building was not accessible to everyone.

And so, we undertook to renovate and expand the Library. This involved a facelift of the inside, while retaining all of the building's original features, and a modest addition. The result, we think you'll agree, is glorious.

An Architect's Challenges and Successes



By Kent McCoy
Project Architect
QA+M

The first time I saw the library, designed by the revered gilded age architect Bruce Price, I remember how beautiful and pristine the building was, almost original in condition.

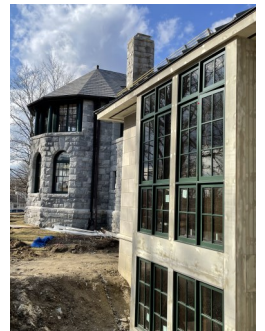
But the library's pristine condition meant that it lacked the necessary amenities of a modern library. It needed to be modified in a way that would allow the building to meet a modern library's needs while not being mistaken as part of the original fabric: it must be complementary, not seamless.

Working with an outstanding building committee, we were able to design an addition in which the exterior massing is subordinate to overall massing of the library and is respectful to the adjacency of the historic building.

As for accessibility, we did not want to add a ramp to the building, which would detract from the historic architecture and look like an afterthought. Instead, wheelchair access is provided on the interior by means of a wheelchair lift. The new rear entrance is through a large arched opening that relates to the main entrance archway facing the Green, but is comprised of glass and metal doors, sidelights, and transom.



Maria Hotchkiss and Bruce Price's vision for the library is still intact, and this wonderful building is better able to serve the needs of the town of Sharon.



Interview with David Moore



Library board member David Moore, an architect himself, chaired the Building Committee and oversaw the construction project from start to finish.

What was the most difficult part of the project?

The whole back of this building, where the addition was going, sits on ledge. The first six inches came off easily, but then it quickly got harder and harder. We literally had to blast our way to make this happen.

You're a veteran of all this, and you know almost every project seems to be late and over budget. Was that the case here?

Yes. It was extremely late. The contractor's original schedule was to be finished by the end of January. Because of Covid, we had to rebid the project and actually got a much lower price than the first bid. But, we made a lot of decisions to add things to the

project, which added to the cost. But I think it was really valuable.

Do you like what you see?

I love what I see, it's so elegant.

Is there one thing about the new building that is your favorite?

Yes, the lighting. Many of the lights were inappropriate. Some were just strip fluorescents on the ceiling. There were wires everywhere and we were able to strip all of the exposed wiring from the building and replace all of the fixtures that were inappropriate.

Anything that disappoints you?

Nothing significant. Maybe the fact that I didn't get to play as much golf this summer as I would have liked.



Maria Hotchkiss Would Love It!

By Gretchen Hachmeister
Executive Director

The restored and reimagined Library is the beginning of an exciting new chapter for the Library. Enhanced accessibility opens our doors to every member of the community.



The beautiful and bright Hayes Family Community Room gives us a space for daytime library programs for all ages, as well as a meeting space

for local nonprofits to hold meetings in the evenings, after library hours.

The digital workroom is available to patrons who bring their own

electronic devices to the library, looking for a quiet spot to work alone or in a small group. Our fiber optic internet service includes a public Wi-Fi network, available throughout and outside the building. We also offer Wi-Fi printing.

The new Children's Reading Room is bright and inviting, with everyone's favorite books and fun, comfortable seating for big and small readers alike. We plan on utilizing our new terraces for fair-weather events.

We are busy planning programs for all ages and look forward to welcoming you to arts instruction, foreign language conversation groups, board game nights, current event discussions, a weekly brown bag lunch, exercise and wellness programming, and movie matinees.

Our new Volunteer Guild is working on an evening film series and monthly Sundays-at-Four speakers.

When Maria Hotchkiss gave this beautiful building to the people of Sharon to fill with books, she had no idea what libraries would become



over a century later. As a community center and gathering place, the Hotchkiss Library is where you will meet your neighbors and make new friends, learn new things, discover new ideas, and connect both personally and digitally. The wonderful books are still there, but there is so much more.

Raising the Money in the Middle of a Pandemic

By Lorna Edmundson
Capital Campaign Chair

Our efforts to raise money for the improved Hotchkiss Library of Sharon began just as the Covid-19 pandemic was intensifying. Yet, armed with a comprehensive strategic plan, and an expert consultant, Sharon Danosky, by our side, we began with confidence, optimism, and trepidation.

Our initial goal was \$1,500,000. Ultimately, we raised more than \$3,560,000. Scores of new patrons, donors, and volunteers joined us. New energy and momentum are palpable. How did this happen? Complex factors were in play:

- Our vision for the future had broad ownership and resonated with community interests and needs.
- Our commitment to position the library as a community hub offering free services to people of all ages and backgrounds was well received.
- Strong, dedicated and generous Board leadership set the pace for giving.

To our surprise, COVID, in unexpected ways, actually fostered giving.

- While we couldn't meet in person, Zoom meetings were easier to schedule and convenient for solicitors and out-of-state prospects who, because of COVID, couldn't meet in person.
- The influx of young and older people escaping city confinement helped swell the numbers of potential patrons and donors.
- Contrary to logic, in a time of crisis, people become even more generous.



Ultimately, our community's great generosity and keen grasp of the essential role public libraries play in its citizens' lives made success possible.

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11:00 AM

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Join us for a community celebration with ice cream, treats, tours and a scavenger hunt!



www.hotchkisslibraryofsharon.org

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