

Constitution of Charity Library  
 Made Sept 14<sup>th</sup> 1790

Whereas the said Deming  
 Late of Wetherfield in the County of Hartford  
 in his last will & testament Dated the 14<sup>th</sup> of  
 April 1787 did give & bequeath unto the  
 of Newington in the County of Wetherfield A Legacy of  
 Sum of Sixty pounds lawful Money for the  
 of procuring only a sufficient quantity of  
 orthodox Books of Divinity of Calvinistic Principles  
 at the care and direction of the two Standing



A Brief History of  
 Library Services in Newington

To sum of sixty pounds lawful Money  
 the purpose aforesaid then the will of testator is that the  
 passage shall be found & the annual interest apply  
 imposed for the support of the South District in the town  
 Newington their heirs & successors forever apply  
 to legacy has been in the hands of the executors till the  
 has amounted to five pounds lawful money so that the  
 capital & interest of 50 pounds lawful money for 50 years



*Lucy Robbins Welles, Fanny Welles, Mary Welles Eddy*

## A Brief History of Library Services in Newington

The idea for this history emerged during a casual conversation with Marian Amodeo, myself, and two others. The question which arose was, "Who were the previous Librarians?"

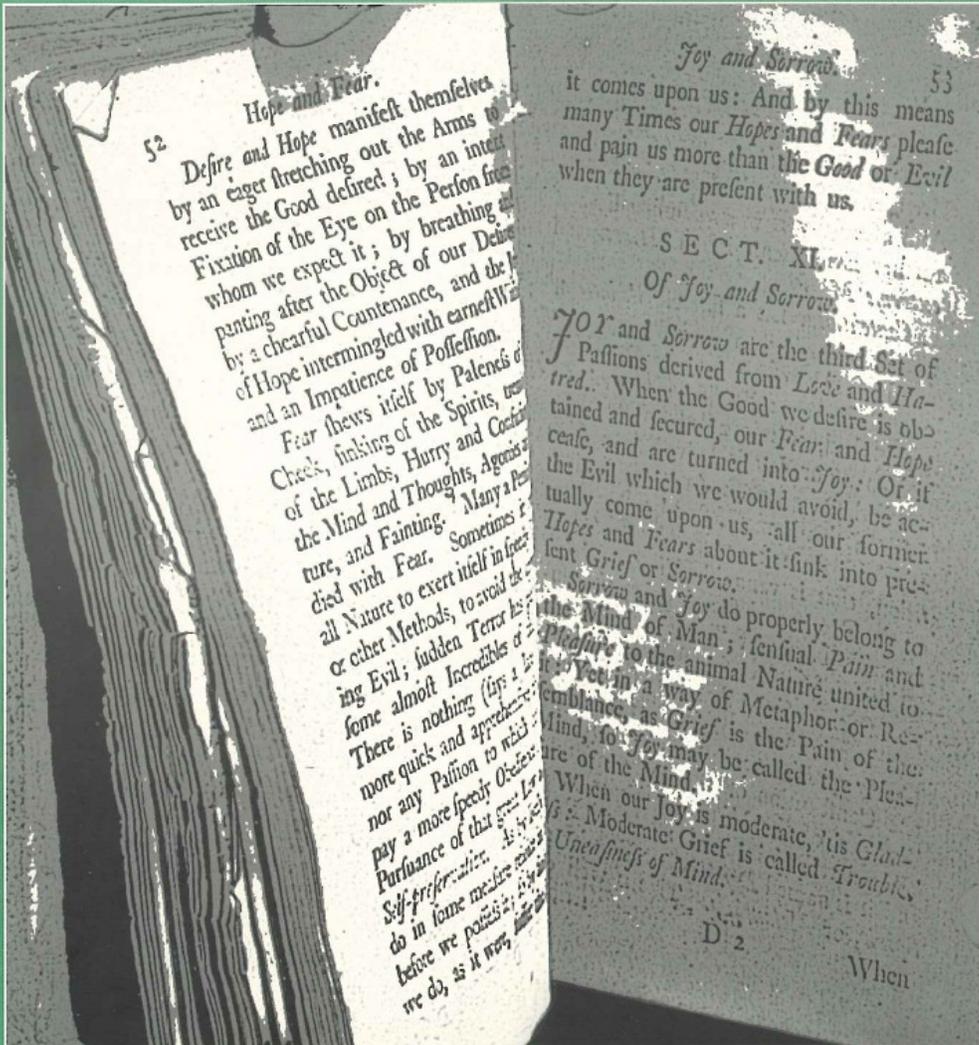
Upon deciding to answer the question, my research revealed not only those who held the position over the years, but also the many services which the various libraries have provided to the people of Newington for almost 250 years.

Eileen Cormier

THIS BUILDING  
WAS ERECTED  
IN 1939  
IN MEMORY  
OF  
LUCY  
ROBBINS  
WELLES  
THROUGH  
THE BEQUEST OF  
HER DAUGHTER  
FANNY  
AUGUSTA  
WELLES

*Front cover: Constitution of the Charity Library, 1790.*

*Inset: Main entrance to Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 1999.*



A book from one of Newington's early libraries.

### Newington Libraries

Newington has a long library history, beginning in 1752. At that time, there were "The Newington Library," also referred to as "The Book Company," and the "Library Company in Newington." The collections probably contained about two hundred books, the majority of which were of a religious nature.

In 1752, the population of Newington numbered approximately 300 people. The Reverend Joshua Belden was the minister and the parish was struggling with issues such as the annexation of a western part of the parish to Kensington, building a pound, building pews for the meeting house, and keeping school in the north district and the central part of the "Society for not less than three months annually by a schoolmaster."<sup>1</sup>

**With all of these demands on the people, it is truly amazing that the luxury of a borrowing library was in place.**

*Constitution for the Charity Library, 1790.*

*Constitution of Charity Library  
Made Sept 14<sup>th</sup> 1790*

### The Charity Library

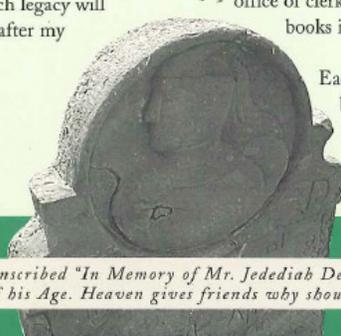
In 1787, Jedediah Deming, a Newington farmer of considerable wealth, bequeathed "to the Society of Newington a legacy of the sum of sixty pounds lawful silver money accounting Spanish milled Dollars at six shillings each to be raised and paid out of my personal and moveable estate for the purpose of procuring only a sufficient quantity of good Orthodox Books of Divinity at the care and direction of the two Standing Officiating Deacons for the time being in said Society, and from time to time by them and their successors in said office, to be improved as opportunity and occasion may require for procuring a suitable quantity of books of the aforesaid description, of Calvinistist (sic) principles, for furnishing a suitable library for publick use in said Society as far as the same may necessarily extend forever, which legacy will be paid by my executors within one year after my decease."<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Deming died in 1787, but it was not until 1790 that the deacons acted on the legacy.

In 1790, the War for Independence was over and Newington's foremost discussion concerned the location and replacement of the meetinghouse. The subject of establishing the library seems to have moved faster than that of the meetinghouse. The issue of the meetinghouse was finally resolved in 1797.

Elisha Stoddard and Charles Churchill, who were the standing officiating deacons of the Society of Newington in 1790, wrote a constitution and regulations for the Charity Library. Some of the regulations included appointing a "suitable discreet person who shall act as clerk."<sup>3</sup> Also, "Each regular inhabitant...of Newington who is head of a family...while being first enrolled in the office of clerk...[will] have liberty of perusing the books in the library."<sup>4</sup>

Each person having a right to peruse the books would "be allowed to take one Octavo or large volume,"<sup>5</sup> or two smaller volumes, and all books would be returned within or at the end of



*The gravestone of Jedediah Deming is inscribed "In Memory of Mr. Jedediah Deming who died April 19<sup>th</sup> A.D. 1787 in the 74<sup>th</sup> year of his Age. Heaven gives friends why should we complain."*



*Lucy Robbins Welles*

two calendar months from the time they were borrowed. Fines were imposed if one neglected to return on schedule.

"Library Day" was established on the last Thursday of each month in the afternoon from four to eight o'clock. Simon Welles served as librarian for many years.

### **Social Library**

Early in the nineteenth century William Kirkham kept a small collection of books in his home. Kirkham, "prominent among the intelligent citizens of the town,"<sup>6</sup> was a schoolteacher who served in several communities around Hartford. As was the custom at the time, during the week he boarded with families of his students, returning to Newington for the weekend.

The books in this library were mostly histories, and it was Mr. Kirkham's intention to offer borrowers some-

thing other than theological books. In 1834, the collection was moved to the home of Roger Welles, which was located on the site of the present Lucy Robbins Welles Library. The Welles home and its contents were destroyed by fire in 1855, thus ending The Social Library.

### **The Young Men's Library**

The fourth library, called "The Young Men's Library," left no records and scant reference to its existence. The *Early Annals of Newington* states that The Young Men's Library was "instituted by the young men of the generation of General Martin Kellogg and Captain Daniel Willard."<sup>7</sup> General Kellogg lived from 1781 to 1868 and Captain Willard from 1784 to 1868.

It is interesting to note that in the 1870 U.S. Census for Newington Parish, Hudson Stoddard, age 33, lists his occupation as librarian.<sup>8</sup> His place of employment is not stated.

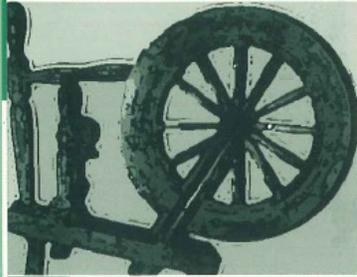
### **The Library of the Young People's Literary Association**

The Library of the Young People's Literary Association was founded in 1877. Among its members were Henry L. Kellogg, Jr., Arlan P. Francis, Charles E. Welles, Thomas A. Kirkham, Martin Welles, Lillie R. Welles, Frank Stoddard, Charles J. Welles, Mary C. Welles, Kate Atwood, Frances H. Kirkham and others.

The Literary Association set a high standard of excellence in the selection of its books, choosing both nonfiction and novels. The town's population had grown to

953 and Newington had been incorporated for 24 years.

Miss Lillie R. Welles was the librarian until 1885 and the books were kept at the home of her father, Edwin Welles and his wife, Lucy.



The elegant, square, flat-roofed house dating to the mid-nineteenth century is located on Cedar Street about opposite the present Lucy Robbins Welles Library.

George Seymour succeeded Lillie Welles as librarian and the library was moved to his house, where it remained until 1895.

In the first years of this library, a fee of three cents was charged for the first two weeks a book was borrowed and five cents for each succeeding week. As time went on, the first two weeks were free, but the five-cent charge for succeeding weeks remained in effect.

Literary meetings were held twice each month. It appears that these gatherings were social as well as literary, as evidenced by two marriages from within the group.

Henry L. Kellogg, Jr. married Frances Kirkham and Arlan P. Francis married Kate Atwood.

### Newington Public Library

In 1893, the Connecticut Legislature enacted a law creating the Connecticut Public Library Committee. By proviso, any town which established a free public library might receive from the State an amount for books equal to the town's appropriation, but not to exceed \$200.

At the annual town meeting of 1894, it was voted to establish a free public library and adopt by-laws providing for its management by a board of six directors. The town appropriated \$200 for its establishment and \$50 for its maintenance.

It was another year before a suitable location became available. At the town meeting of 1895, a vote directed the selectmen to give the library directors the use of the upper floor of the Town Hall which was located on the east side of Main Street, in the center of town. The library opened on October 19, 1895. The town assumed the cost of maintaining the room, but there were no funds to employ a librarian. Therefore, the six directors volunteered their services on a rotating basis. The library was open Wednesday evenings and Saturday afternoons and evenings.

The book entitled *The Birds About Us* by Charles Abbott, M.D., published by J.B. Lippincott, Co., Philadelphia, 1895, bears a plate which reads "Newington Public Library, Added March 1895, Accession No. 1."<sup>9</sup>

The population at that time was about one thousand inhabitants, and nearly 200 persons became subscribers. In less than a year more than two thousand books had been borrowed.

At the annual town meeting of October 1896, the fifty-dollar appropriation was increased to one hundred dollars, enabling the Board of Directors to employ a librarian. At the time, the Reverend Herbert Macy was board president and Albert B. Fish was secretary.<sup>10</sup>

With the increased appropriation voted in October 1896, the Board of Directors employed Miss Lizzie Root as librarian. Her annual compensation was \$40 and her

assistant, Miss Luce, received \$15. Periodicals and worn books were bound at an expense of \$26.30. A "liberal allowance," \$22.70, was expended on magazines and periodicals, and four new bookcases were built at a cost of \$30.<sup>11</sup> The number of books borrowed continued to increase.

Since 1895, it had been the vision of the Board of Directors to have a library building. The first step in that direction was taken at the town meeting in 1907 when it was voted that the Library Directors give an unexpended balance of \$50 to the town treasurer to be deposited in a savings account as the Newington Public Library Building Fund. A bequest from the estate of Hugh Kerwin added significantly to the fund in 1916.

In February 1909, a Library Committee voted to open a branch library at the Junction. Newington Junction, named for the two railroad lines which passed through Newington's north end, was a very busy community within the town. Mrs. Chidley, a Junction resident, offered a room in her home for the library and acted as branch librarian. Seventy-five books were borrowed from the center library on a monthly basis and circulated among the persons living at the Junction. About seventy-five patrons used the branch library, which was open on Thursdays and Saturdays.

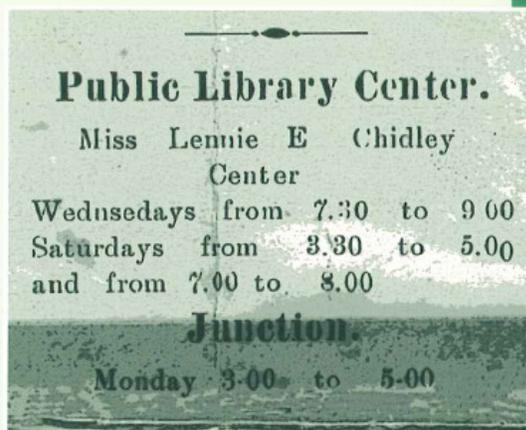
That same year, Librarian Florence L. Steele reported that summer visitors to the town enjoyed the privileges of the library for a deposit of one dollar. She also reported that fines from overdue books enabled the library to purchase new books as they were published.

Additionally in 1909, Miss Steele reported "one unfortunate and discouraging feature" — that changes in Town Hall were "depriving the patrons of the pleasure of

reading and reference room by taking away both tables and chairs."<sup>12</sup> However, her annual report of 1910 stated that "The Newington Public Library has greatly enjoyed its new quarters." A magazine rack was purchased at a cost of \$10, cabinets were built for \$9.65, book cases \$28.89, and the cost to the library to move from the upper to lower hall was \$2.40.

Miss Ida L. Kellogg was the librarian from 1912 to 1913, and she worked in cooperation with the teachers to cultivate a desire in the students for reading good books. At the time the library regularly received twenty periodicals and could "accommodate 12 readers comfortably as a new table and six chairs have been added."<sup>13</sup>

In 1914, Miss Jennie E. Chidley, daughter of the late Mrs. Chidley, who had been acting librarian at the Junction, was appointed director and acting librarian. An advertisement from the *Newington News*, November, 1915<sup>14</sup> reads:



**Public Library Center.**  
Miss Lennie E Chidley  
Center  
Wednesdays from 7.30 to 9 00  
Saturdays from 3.30 to 5.00  
and from 7.00 to 8.00  
**Junction.**  
Monday 3-00 to 5-00

At this time the Directors voted to deposit two-thirds of the fines from overdue books into the Library Building Fund. The amount for 1915 was \$8.38. Miss Chidley's annual salary was \$60 and the annual cost of periodicals was \$39.40.

The circulation greatly increased among schoolchildren in 1915, and the library opened on Wednesday afternoons to meet the demand. Stereoscope photographs of Belgium and a stereoscope were donated to the library and could be viewed on request.

Miss Ida L. Kellogg was again appointed librarian in 1917 and remained in the position through 1929.

The year 1918 found the country at war and Miss Kellogg reported, "Numerous food conservation receipts and pamphlets have been distributed, and as long as the war lasts the public may expect to obtain whatever is needed in that line at the library."<sup>15</sup> Her

report also noted that a request for books for the "soldiers and sailors" was met with "a generous response."

The population of Newington was growing, and by 1920 there were 2,381 inhabitants. The library collection also grew, to a total of 5,531 volumes. Library fines for overdue books continued to be added to the Library Building Fund. The most significant news regarding the Library Building Fund appears in Miss Kellogg's annual report of 1920. Mr. E. Welles Eddy reported the bequest of Miss Fanny A. Welles of a lot on Main Street and \$10,000 to be held in trust until sufficient to construct a library building. The building was to be named "The Lucy Robbins Welles Library" in honor of Miss Welles' mother.

An "Encyclopedia Fund" was established from "fines receipts" in 1927.<sup>16</sup>

Miss Marjorie E. Hale was appointed librarian in 1930 and she remained in the position until 1942. The 1930s were a time of many changes for the Newington Library.



*Miss Marjorie E. Hale*

Miss Hale was anxious to make the library an inviting place to visit. To achieve this she had cupboard doors removed, creating open shelves. From the doors a U-shaped charging desk was built. The walls were painted a light color and in one section low shelves and a long bench were added to create a children's area. The children, and a special section for them, were of primary concern to Miss Hale.<sup>17</sup>



*The Lucy Robbins Welles Library in 1939.*

The town purchased the Grange Hall building located on the west side of Main Street, and in 1938, the town offices and the library moved there. The library was located on the third floor and remained there until the opening of the present building in 1939.

During the 1930s the library was open Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday afternoons and evenings.

In the morning the librarian made visits to the schools, providing the classrooms with books.

### **The Lucy Robbins Welles Library**

The fund established by the will of Miss Fanny A. Welles to build a public library reached its goal, as administered by its trustees, Mr. E. Welles Eddy and Mr. Stanley R. Eddy. A lot at the corner of Mill and Cedar Streets was given by Mary Welles Eddy, sister of Miss Fanny Welles. The trustees deemed this location more suitable than the Main Street lot donated by Miss Fanny Welles. An adjoining parcel was purchased and the library was built on the Cedar Street site.

The Lucy Robbins Welles Library opened in 1939 and the citizens of Newington have been proud of their library ever since. Considered a jewel of the community, the library is constructed of brownstone and brick with a gambrel roof, and resembles a colonial home with adaptations for library and civic use. The doorway facing Cedar Street is in the style of a typical Connecticut River Valley doorway of the eighteenth century. Copied from the doorway of the circa 1750 Charles Churchill House (which stood on the present

location of Churchill Park,) its double panel doors are topped by a broken scroll pediment with rosettes and fluted pilasters.

The interior rooms of the library are especially inviting. There are four fireplaces, paneled walls, and interesting detail has been given to the fireplace surrounds. The *Hartford Courant* reported on February 11, 1940 that the library was "comfortably furnished with sofas, chairs, tables and lamps."<sup>18</sup> Among the fine antiques are two tall case clocks made by David Lowrey (1740-1819) of Newington. One clock is from the aforementioned Captain Charles Churchill house, and the other was owned by Lucy Robbins Welles, great granddaughter of David Lowrey.

Newington's population continued to increase and in 1940 reached 5,449. A total of 971 persons were registered as borrowers at the library. In a statement to the superintendent of schools, the library announced a change in its policy in order to meet the needs of the community. With the library across the street from both the Center Grammar School and the high school, all books of a general nature could be borrowed directly from the library. Money previously spent for school libraries would be used at the public library where books were accessible to more people.

In 1941, a picture file was added and 304 pictures circulated.

Miss Virginia M. Hoagland was named librarian in 1942. The country was at war and the Lucy Robbins Welles Library was selected to act as a "War Information Center."<sup>19</sup> The library received government information pamphlets for this purpose. A nationwide Victory Book Drive gathered books for men in the armed forces and the Lucy Robbins Welles Library was a regional center for collecting books which would be sent to military camps. Due to gas rationing, telephone requests for books were honored and the requested books were mailed to borrowers. Locked glass exhibit cases were added to the library and local hobbyists loaned their collections for exhibits, receiving favorable comments.

By 1943, the library collection contained 7,600 volumes. A new practice of printing lists of recently acquired books was initiated. The library sponsored two lectures during the



*The David Lowrey clock which belonged to Lucy Robbins Welles.*

year. The first, concerning books, was given by Miss Marion Gordon and the second, by D. Gordon Hunter, "concerning the Global Strategy of the War."<sup>20</sup>

Miss Adelheid Baum replaced Virginia MacGregor (nee Hoagland) in 1943, and, upon her resignation in 1945, Mrs. Merrill Louks, the assistant librarian, was made acting librarian.

A book discussion group met monthly during the winter of 1945 with George Stevens serving as Chairman. Friday afternoon "Story Hours" were held during the school year, and a display of "War Relics" collected by Newington men returning from all parts of the globe was exhibited. The library, in addition to being a reading center, was also becoming a cultural center.



*Mrs. H. S. Potter*

In 1946, Mrs. Harriet S. Potter, a former teacher and librarian, was appointed librarian. She continued many of the established programs and instituted others.

With the end of the war there was a renewed interest in the library as reflected by the increased circulation. More than 30,000 books circulated in 1946. A list of the library's new acquisitions was published in *The Hartford Times* and *The Hartford Courant*. A survey of patrons' reading interests revealed that fiction led the list, followed by biography. The Garden Club placed bouquets in the library in the spring and summer months and the library facilities were frequently used by local organizations. The library purchased a mimeograph machine to publish the monthly list of new books. Mrs. Potter began a series of monthly book reviews and established a service for delivering books to shut-ins.

To stimulate an interest in reading, the library staff continued to bring books to each school, including the high school. Enlarging the reference collection became a priority, and there was a marked increase in the use of the reading room. A sign of prosperity can be noted by the wide interest for books on handcrafts and home construction. Mrs. Potter began the practice of monthly visits to the fourth, fifth and sixth grade classrooms,

listening to book reviews by the students, and discussing books and authors with them. A Teenage Room was set up in the library to foster reading among junior high school students.

In 1949, a bequest worthy of note was made by E. Stanley Welles. His collection of literature, biographies and historical material was given to the library. This contribution enhanced the "history collection" which was started many years previously by the Reverend Harry Martin.

The Lucy Robbins Welles Library was a busy place full of activity during the 1950s. The town population was 9,110 and 31 percent of the residents held library cards. The weekly library hours were increased from 36 to 45 hours and Mrs. Gertrude K. Hollings joined the staff. Book Week was celebrated annually in November and in 1952 a five-day Open House was held at the library to celebrate two hundred years of library service in Newington.

The library was given a slide projector and screen which made it possible to present a series of four travelogues using slides and narration. This program was well received and continued for several seasons.



*Mrs. Gertrude K. Hollings, children's librarian.*

The increase in circulation necessitated a change to an electric charging machine which was more rapid and more accurate. By 1953, materials from the children's section constituted one half of the circulation. In the summer of 1954, Mrs. Hollings organized a "Book Worm Reading Club"<sup>21</sup> for young people. Forty-five students read at least fifteen books over the summer vacation. This activity has continued in different formats and still is a very popular program. Also at that time, Mrs. Hollings was appointed to the new position of children's librarian and two student pages now assisted the staff. The first page had joined the staff in the previous year.

The steady growth in library services during the 1950s necessitated some changes. A children's room was created on the second floor and other spaces on the first floor were

rearranged. A browsing corner was established and a magazine reading room was developed. The library



*The traveling library brought books into Newington's neighborhoods until 1970.*

purchased a bookmobile in 1955, which was used to visit the elementary schools and outlying residential neighborhoods. To meet the space needs at the library, a committee was appointed to consider a possible addition to the building. As the decade came to a close, Mrs. Potter ended her career as librarian, retiring after so ably carrying out the many duties of her position.

William J. VanBeynum was named librarian in 1960 and immediately found himself working with the building committee exploring the needs of the library in addition to carrying on the other duties and established programs. A building expansion plan was accepted. Using funds from private sources and a grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, ground was broken on May 23, 1960. The addition would house the children's room with additional space for adult books. The wing opened in December 1960.

The Civitan Club presented the library with an Auto Page Book Drop which was placed at the curb on Cedar Street. This convenience enabled patrons to return books at any time. A group of citizens met to form a Friends of the Library organization in March 1961. The aim of the group was to focus "public attention on the services and needs of the Lucy Robbins Welles Library."<sup>22</sup> More than two hundred people indicated an interest in joining.

As established a few years earlier, the library continued to host the Annual Fall Flower show of the Newington Garden Club and the Art Show of Newington High

School students. With the town population now at 17,664, the library claimed 7,273 registered borrowers and the bookmobile

operated on five routes with a total of 28 stops. The Friends issued a newsletter, and during National Library Week, the Friends hosted an Author-Illustrator Tea. Another extension of the services of the library was the establishment of a collection of phonograph records.

In 1963, Silas Townsend was named librarian. The collection contained 25,591 volumes. However, even that large number of books was not always sufficient to meet the needs of the borrowers. Therefore, Newington entered a reciprocal plan with Wethersfield and Glastonbury, permitting residents to use their library card in those two towns.

Children's librarian Gertrude K. Hollings was appointed librarian in 1964. The total volumes now numbered 30,153 including 506 new books for reference and books of a "permanent value,"<sup>23</sup> added from a grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. Selecting, receiving and cataloging 506 new books at one time was a task of enormous proportion carefully and judiciously carried out by the staff. With the use of this grant the reference department was now able to adequately meet the needs in this area.

New services in 1968 included books in large type and a coin-operated photocopy machine. A Federal Funds grant of \$2,000 added to the reference collection. Most of the other established activities continued, with borrowers numbering 9,051. In 1969, the library celebrated thirty years as "The Lucy Robbins Welles Library." Framed art reproductions were added to the collection, permitting patrons to borrow prints for a period of six weeks. The library hours were extended to sixty-two hours per week, and for the first time included morning hours.

The bookmobile service continued until 1970, but as times changed, so did the needs of the community. The bookmobile was no longer necessary for the mobile society of the 1970s.

The 1970s were a time of even more growth for the



*Newington schoolchildren on a visit to the Lucy Robbins Welles Library in 1962.*

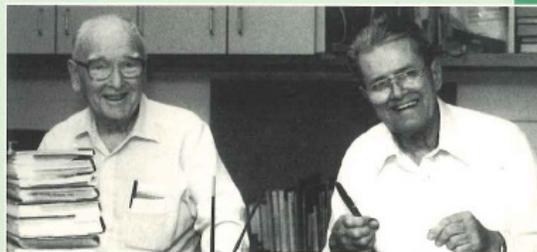
library. The Reciprocal Loan Agreement was extended to all of the libraries in the Capitol region, and in 1974 CON-NECTICARD was

established, enabling a Newington card holder to borrow at any public library in Connecticut. The library sponsored the publication of *The Centennial History of Newington 1971*, compiled and edited by Elizabeth S. Baxter of Newington. The librarians were happy at last to have a contained Newington reference.

January 1975 saw the retirement of Gertrude Hollings, who was succeeded by Lee Clapp. The library hired its first professional reference librarian and with this new staff person the reference department was reorganized and made more accessible to the public.

More community programs were offered, including concerts, poetry readings and film lectures, in addition to the many activities in the Children's Room. As the decade closed, Maxine Bleiweis was appointed library director.

The 1980s brought the Lucy Robbins Welles Library into the computer age with the installation of a computerized circulation system. With the library claiming 14,000 patrons, which was almost half of the local population, the efficiency of the system made it possible to handle the more than 180,000 materials borrowed in 1982. Additionally in that year, 7,000 informational questions were answered. This was quite a response to the library's publicity theme, "Just Ask Us."



*Volunteers like Bill Pape and Bob Middlemas helped the library with a variety of projects ranging from processing books to fundraising.*

The Friends were reactivated in 1979 and numbered 700 families and individuals. They organized and ran a highly

successful used book sale which has become an annual event.

In 1982, a consultant was hired for a building needs assessment. It was determined that more space was essential for continued growth of the library. The Town Council agreed to a referendum regarding a library addition with the proviso that the library raise the funds for the referendum. The funds were raised, the referendum passed and a building committee was formed. The design plans called for keeping the original building and adding modern space to meet the anticipated needs, with the main entrance to be located on Mill Street.

Voter approval came in November 1985. Next came the Herculean job of moving the entire library collection to temporary quarters. With the help of the Friends, other volunteers and staff, everything was packed, and professional movers were hired to transport the collection across Cedar Street to the former New Meadow School. That location would be the temporary home of the library for almost two years. Some items in the library would not be used in the soon to be expanded building, so the Friends held a "Going Out of Building" auction which realized \$14,000 for furnishings for the new building.

Regular library service was provided in the temporary quarters, and it was even possible to add a compact disc collection as a new service. The Friends, ever busy at fund-raising, successfully raised \$15,000 for books for the expanded building, and "Business Friends" pledged \$70,000 for equipment and furnishings.

February 22, 1988 marked the opening of the newly renovated and expanded Lucy Robbins Welles Library. Maxine Bleiweis, Library Director, described the new facility as a "building which honors the past, serves the present and inspires the future."<sup>34</sup>

Increased library service necessitated additions to the staff. The library became a very busy place, offering a variety of adult and children's activities as well as providing facilities for civic use. It continues to this day with study carrels, two study rooms, computers for word processing, a typewriter for public use and meeting rooms of various sizes. By 1989, 800 people were using the library daily.



*In addition to coffee and tea, the Cup and Chaucer Café offers a variety of books and gifts for sale.*



*Internet access and electronic databases are popular resources.*

The 1990s arrived and the library continued to offer more new programs. Reference department staff compiled the *Newington Information Packet* and *Community Services Directory*. The children's department established a teacher resource center to meet the needs of elementary school teachers. A newly designed reference desk was installed.

The card catalog became available via computer in 1993. To the initial consternation of some patrons, the card catalog was removed soon after. Now almost seven years later, it is all but forgotten and the computer stations are constantly in use.

Among its kudos that same year, the Lucy Robbins Welles Library was recognized nationally for its outreach to the business community and Marian Amodeo received statewide recognition as the recipient of the Faith H. Hektoen Award for Excellence in Services to Children.

A new venture for the library in 1993 was the opening of the Cup & Chaucer Café, offering patrons the opportunity to enjoy a casual cup of tea or coffee when using the library.

Maxine Bleiweis resigned in December 1997. After a wide search to replace her, the committee realized the best candidate was already on the staff. Marian Amodeo, who for many years was head of children's services, was appointed to fill the position. She hasn't missed a step. Today the town population exceeds 29,000 and the library budget stands at \$1,300,000. With a staff numbering almost 50 full- and part-time people, Marian Amodeo is ready to bring the Lucy Robbins Welles Library into the next millennium.

How prophetic Gertrude Hollings was in 1965 when she said, "It may be in these changing times, library service will some day be so changed, that computers will be able to find information for you from library sources all over the country."<sup>25</sup> Indeed! The Lucy Robbins Welles Library keeps up with current advances in technology but remains a warm and friendly place. The staff is knowledgeable and always helpful, and the reading rooms and study areas maintain the quiet dignity one expects in a library.

Eileen Cormier  
March 1, 1999



*Marian Amodeo, library director,  
with Lisa Masten, assistant director.*

*The 1988 renovation included an atrium, connecting the original and new buildings.*



Young readers enjoy the children's room in the early 1960s.

Notes

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| <p>1. Roger Welles, cd., <i>Early Annals of Newington</i>, (Case, Lockwood &amp; Brainard Co., 1874, reprint n.d.) p. 66.</p> <p>2. Will of Jedediah Deming, April 14, 1787, photocopy of original, Manuscript Collection, Newington Historical Society &amp; Trust, Inc.</p> <p>3. Constitution of Charity Library, September 14, 1790, Manuscript Collection, Newington Historical Society &amp; Trust, Inc.</p> <p>4. Constitution of Charity Library.</p> <p>5. Constitution of Charity Library.</p> | <p>6. Henry G. Little. <i>Early Days in Newington, Connecticut 1833-1900</i>, privately printed 1937, reprint Unigraphic, Inc., 1977, p. 21.</p> <p>7. Welles, <i>Early Annals of Newington</i>, p. 126.</p> <p>8. Neil Hogan. <i>A New Epoch</i>, (Newington Historical Society &amp; Trust, Inc., 1997) p. 21.</p> <p>9. Document and Rare Book Collection, Newington Historical Society &amp; Trust, Inc.</p> <p>10. Herbert Macy and Albert B. Fish. <i>Newington, Connecticut Public Library Document 1897</i>, (Connecticut Public Library Committee) p. 122.</p> <p>11. Report of the Town of Newington 1897-98, p. 12.</p> | <p>12. Annual Report Town of Newington 1909, p. 44.</p> <p>13. Annual Report Town of Newington 1913, p. 21.</p> <p>14. <i>Newington News</i>, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 8.</p> <p>15. Annual Report Town of Newington 1917-1918, p. 21.</p> <p>16. Annual Report Town of Newington 1927, p. 25.</p> <p>17. Interview with Marjorie Hale Dickman, October 1998.</p> <p>18. <i>Hartford Courant</i>, February 11, 1940, p.2, gravure section.</p> <p>19. Annual Report Town of Newington 1942, p. 80.</p> <p>20. Annual Report Town of Newington 1943, p. 87.</p> |
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20. Annual Report Town of Newington 1943, p. 87.
21. Annual Report Town of Newington 1954, p. 83.
22. Annual Report Town of Newington 1961, p. 28.
23. Annual Report Town of Newington 1964, p. 38.
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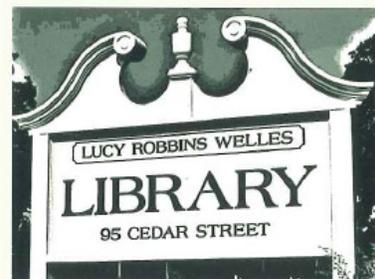
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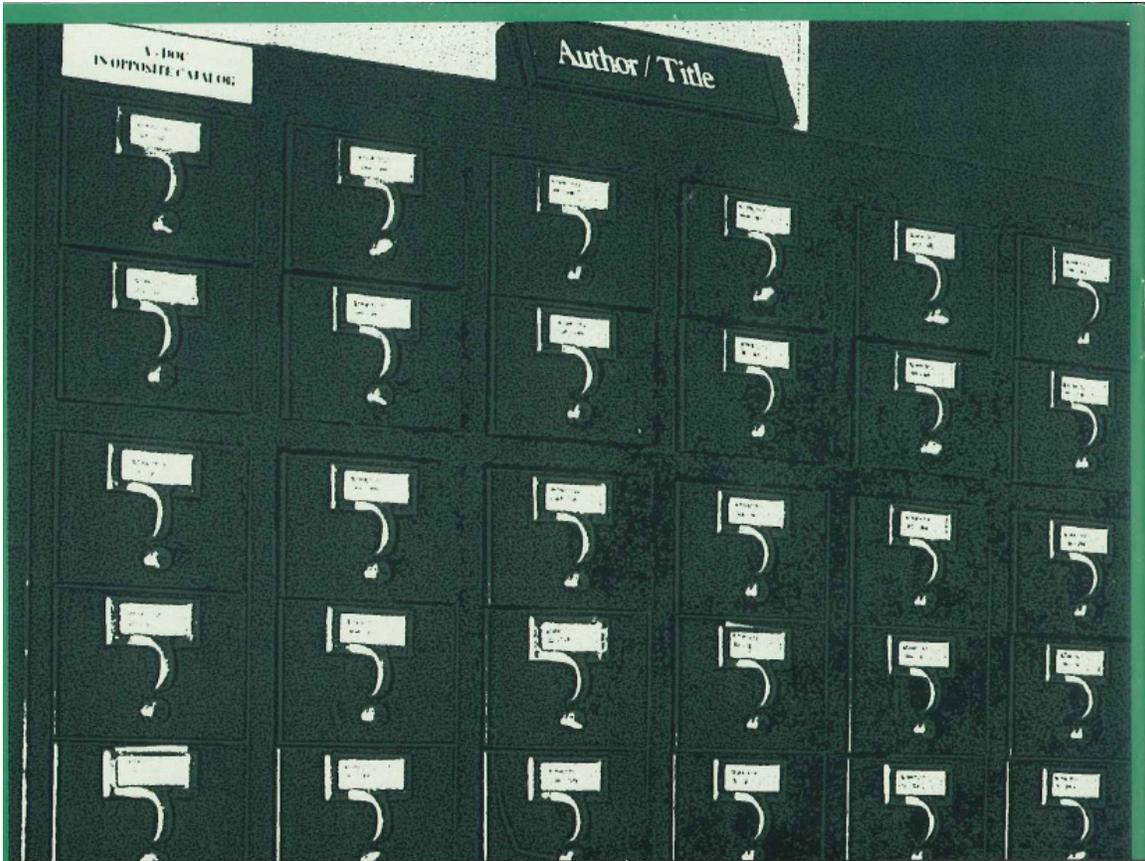
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