THOMAS CRANE PUBLIC LIBRARY
QUINCY, MASSACHUSETTS

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Memorial Library to the City of Quincy, the Crane family wanted to create an architectural masterpiece in an area of Quincy that it hoped would become "the Coplay Square of the South."
In 1880 Albert Crane wrote to the Quincy selectmen that the Crane family wished to build a library in memory of his father, Thomas Crane, the library “to be known as the Crane Memorial...” and “to be held in trust forever by the town... for the free use of the town as a Public Library Building."

Quincy has held this library “in trust” for one hundred and twenty years, adding another chapter to its history with this beautiful addition, and preserving its history with the loving restoration of the Richardson building.

Hundreds of people have contributed to this project with their skills, their time, their services and their creative efforts. Hundreds more have donated nearly one million dollars to commemorate what the library has meant in their lives and the lives of those they love.

Libraries contain the history of our civilization, and the stories of the people, both humble and famous, who make up this history. Libraries open the doors of learning and literacy to people of all ages, from all walks of life, free to all. The mission of public libraries remains as vital to our country as it was one hundred and twenty years ago when the Crane Memorial Library opened its doors.

Today we rededicate ourselves to these ideals of freedom and literacy for all as we begin a new century of library service in this hallowed place.

Ann E. McLaughlin
Director of Libraries, Thomas Crane Public Library
The Thomas Crane Memorial Library was constructed in four parts:
- the 1882 Richardson building
- the 1908 Aiken addition
- the 1939 Coletti addition, funded in part with a grant from the United States Public Works Administration
- the 2001 CBT addition, which nearly doubles the size of the Richardson, Aiken, and Coletti additions.
BUILDING A LEGACY

BY JESSIE M. THUMA

It started in 1882 as a monument to a wealthy stone contractor who got his start in Quincy's granite quarries: a library—simple but stately—designed by the most famous architect of the time, Henry Hobson Richardson. Inside its granite and brownstone walls, Quincy's 9,200 residents—including the descendants of John Adams, the second president of the United States—could sit by the fireplace and read from a collection of 12,000 books that included such titles as Bigelow's Travels in Sicily and Malta.

The dedication today of the newest and largest addition to the Thomas Crane Memorial Library marks the transformation of this National Historic Landmark into a library that preserves that architectural legacy, while making room for the books, computers, and meeting spaces that will serve Quincy's diverse population of 88,000 well into the 21st century.

"It is a credit to all those people, like John and Abigail Adams and the Crane family—who promoted education and the arts," says Quincy Mayor James Sheets. "They would be proud to see that tradition move forward in a building that fits so well with the original Richardson library."

The $16 million addition is also a credit to the people who paid for it. From private donors and public businesses that contributed tens of thousands of dollars, to countless individual patrons who for three years dropped loose change and dollar bills into the collection jars that sat out on every circulation desk in the library system.

Quincy family physician Paul Ossen paid for both the restoration of the old reading room with its cathedral ceilings and massive windows, and the construction of a new browsing room on the first floor.

Library staff and local politicians worked with the Massachusetts legislative delegation to secure a $3.5 million grant from the state's Board of Library Commissioners. Friends and family of the late city councilor Patricia Toland led the effort to have the Children's Library named in her honor.

Help came from outside the city as well, when Pulitzer Prize-winning author and historian David McCullough hosted a reception and lecture that helped raise more than $25,000.

Like the founders of the original Richardson building, these people demonstrated their belief that the library is a vital part of the intellectual and educational life of a community. "You don't build libraries for the short term," says Mayor Sheets, explaining why the city opted for such a large expansion. "You build them for the generations to come."

Nowhere is the meeting of the old and new elements of the library more apparent than in the three-story atrium that is now at the center of the Thomas Crane Memorial Library. Walk into the new entrance on Washington Street and
immediately to the left is the glazed brick exterior wall of the 1939 Coletti addition, renovated to be one of three interior walls of the atrium.

An inviting café sells coffee, which patrons sip while sitting or talking at round metal tables scattered across the gray slate floor. Sun shines in through rows of windows reminiscent of those that light the original Richardson building.

The atrium gives visitors a chance to socialize and get oriented in what has become a much larger facility. Directly off the atrium is the Children’s Library, where child-sized armchairs share space with a bank of computers that allow youngsters access to educational software, and to the Internet. Up the broad stairs of the atrium is the main circulation desk, and looking down into the atrium are balconies and windows that open off the first floor reading room and the second floor reference department that is now the largest in the South Shore.

“As a public space, I think this works,” says architect Richard Bertman, whose Boston firm Childs, Bertman, and Tseckares—CBT—designed the 56,000 square foot addition, which also boasts a community meeting room that can seat 135 people, a computer laboratory, and three group study rooms. “What we wanted to do was create something that recalled but didn’t copy” the Romanesque design of the earlier Richardson building, and the Coletti building which was added in 1939.

While cost constraints did force Bertman to abandon some proposed features of the new addition—like skylights in the atrium ceiling—he was adamant about retaining major icons of the Richardson and Coletti design, like the granite around the base of the building, and a kind and color of brick similar to that used in other Richardson buildings. He was also determined to use the same red slate Richardson used for the new roof.

**HE COULD CHARM A BIRD OUT OF A BUSH**

Henry Hobson Richardson, one of the most famous architects in American history, died in his bed at the age of 47; grossly overweight as a result of a kidney disorder, deeply in debt, and never having owned his own house. “His early death was a wise career move,” observes Richardson biographer James O’Gorman wryly. “I think he had already done his best work.”

One of those “best works” is the original Thomas Crane Memorial Library, which opened its doors to Quincy residents in 1882.

“It’s a warm building that radiates a sense of power and permanence that modern architecture doesn’t have,” says O’Gorman, who is also a professor of Art History at Wellesley College in Wellesley, Massachusetts. “That Romanesque arch over the doorway was (Richardson’s) signature. As an architectural monument, the Crane Library is as important as (any other historical or architectural artifact) in Quincy.”

O’Gorman hasn’t seen the new CBT addition. But with an art historian’s fervor for protecting the integrity of any great work, he says that any modification to the original Crane Library was an architectural mistake: “Architects say it’s a design problem and they can solve it. But Richardson’s buildings were not designed to be added to.”

Of course the beauty for Quincy residents of a library that includes the Richardson building is that they get to see and use the space he designed. “We wanted the H.H. Richardson building to remain a living part of the library,” says Library Director Ann McLaughlin. “Too often, buildings that are architectural gems become museums, and nobody really enjoys them.”

Born on a sugar plantation in Louisiana in 1838, Richardson moved his wife, their six children, and his architectural firm to the Boston area in 1874. Over the next 10 years, his firm produced some of America’s finest buildings, including what is considered Richardson’s masterpiece: Trinity Church in Boston.

The architect’s presence can still be felt in what had been his bedroom—unchanged after 115 years—in the house he and his family rented on Cottage Street in Brookline.

“The most moving of the bedroom’s items,” writes architecture critic Robert Campbell in an article published June 7, 2001 in the *Boston Globe* newspaper, “is a pair of rings, like the land gnomins swing from, that are fastened to one wall. Richardson used them to pull his great bulk upright, probably when he got out of bed. Yet this sick man never flagged, working until the end with enormous energy.”

When Richardson died, his friend Reverend Phillips Brooks likened his death “to the vanishing of a great mountain from the landscape.”

While the rest of the country may have suffered a diminished view, Quincy is lucky. At the very center of this city is an H.H. Richardson building that fully embodies the power and genius of the man who designed it.
"Of all the slate you could possibly buy, it turns out that red is the most expensive," Bertman says with a laugh. "So then we looked at fake slate, and this slate, and finally everyone felt that we needed to do the red slate—and that was good."

Public response to the new building has been overwhelmingly positive. In the seven months since it has been open, library staff have issued more than 3,700 new cards. Circulation is up nearly thirteen percent over this same period in 1998, the year before all but a portion of the main library was closed for nearly three years of construction.

"People love this library and always have," says Ann McLaughlin, who has been instrumental in the concept, design, fundraising, and completion of the CBT addition. It's a tradition that she says dates back nearly 130 years, "when people raised their own money to pay half of the librarian's salary."

The idea of a major library expansion took shape more than 30 years ago during the directorship of Warren Watson, when it became clear that storage in the Richardson and Coletti buildings was becoming a problem. But it wasn't until the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in the early 1990s that the city actually began to explore ways to enlarge the Library and make it handicapped accessible. "It would have cost us 400 thousand dollars just to put in a ramp," says McLaughlin. "For one million dollars we could have had the ramp, an elevator, and accessible rest rooms."

But that didn't begin to address the space demands of incorporating new technology into an old building. As McLaughlin pointed out to city officials, the library was already removing one old book for each new one it purchased. "Finding a place to put computers meant taking away shelving for books."

But even if the city agreed to help fund a major library expansion, politicians and library trustees faced another dilemma: where could they build? The Richardson and Coletti buildings were hemmed in by streets and storefronts.

Once again, the library was blessed by a stroke of good luck: in 1993, the same year that McLaughlin became director of the library, it was able to buy an adjacent block of commercial real estate.

One year later McLaughlin submitted a plan to Mayor Sheets for doubling the size of the Thomas Crane Memorial Library. The Trustees pledged the remaining assets of the Crane Trust Fund towards the expansion, and agreed to raise one million dollars for equipment and furnishings. The remaining $14 and a half million came from a $3.5 million Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners grant, and a $9 million bond issue approved by Quincy's voters.
Richard Bertman is not a man given to making grand statements about the buildings he has designed.

Looking up at the sunlit three-story atrium he added to the Thomas Crane Memorial Library as part of a $16 million expansion, the soft-spoken Boston architect almost seems at a loss for how to answer the question: “What’s your favorite part of the new library?”

“I liked the opportunity to create a place that gives people choices,” he says finally. “From small cozy areas to curl up and read, to large open spaces where groups can gather.”

Bertman also enjoys the contrast between formal and informal design, like that offered by the Augustus Trustees Room on the second floor, and the less structured space in the Children’s Library where children can play.

“It’s this variety and richness that make the Crane Library so special and like a work of art. It continually gives people something new and interesting to experience.”

The architectural firm of Childs, Bertman and Tseckares was the surprise winner in the bidding contest for the Library expansion project, dubbed by one Cambridge designer as the “architectural event of the year.”

“I liked the way that CBT presented itself,” says Library Director Ann McLaughlin. “They wanted to include us in the creative process. I felt strongly that the building had to function well—not just look beautiful. They didn’t dismiss anybody’s ideas.”

Building an addition to a masterpiece like the Thomas Crane Library—designed by the famous 19th century architect Henry Hobson Richardson and widely considered the best of all his libraries—is cause for both excitement and trepidation.

“If you are adding a little bit to an old building, you would keep the architectural styles similar,” says Bertman. “But if you are adding a lot, you are changing the whole character. My sense was that if we tried to be the same,” as the Romanesque design of the Richardson and Colelli buildings, the new addition could look like a cartoon copy of the original.

What CBT did try to preserve were certain signature features of the older buildings, like the red slate roof, the granite foundation, and the decoration around the windows. “Especially in libraries,” he says, “it’s important to honor traditions.”

Inside the building, the big challenge was to strike a balance between organization and chaos: “You need a variety of spaces to keep people interested, but you need a sense of order so they don’t feel overwhelmed.”

The organizing space in the new building is the atrium, which gives visitors a chance to relax and catch their breath before heading off to the Children’s Library, the coffee shop, or the adult and reference libraries. “We studied twenty different ways of doing this,” says Bertman, pointing to joints in the atrium wall that most visitors probably don’t even notice.

Such attention to detail, he adds, is what makes a place beautiful. “Even the color of the mortar is critical.” CBT has applied this same philosophy to its other work, which includes the Nike Building on Newbury Street and an award-winning expansion of the Parlin Library in Everett.

In addition to designing buildings, Bertman is also an accomplished artist and sculptor, who has exhibited his whimsical wire and life-sized wooden sculptures at the Compton Gallery at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

None of the people talking, reading or sipping coffee in the Crane Library’s new atrium recognizes Bertman as the man whose design has nearly doubled the size of this building, and changed the face of Quincy’s downtown. For Bertman, the reward is the work itself: “I like to make beautiful things.”

“The worst moment was when we were turned down for the grant,” says McLaughlin, recalling the Commissioners’ initial rejection of the expansion plan. But that failure only intensified McLaughlin’s determination, shared by Mayor Sheets and the Library Board of Trustees, to revise and resubmit the second and successful grant application. It turned out to be one of the largest grants the Commission has funded.

Ground breaking for the CBT addition happened on a cloudless day in late July, 1998. As local dignitaries, politicians, library officials and CBT architect Richard Bertman stood under the bright sun wearing hard hats and smiling into the camera, they had no idea that the new building would take three years rather than the projected 18 months to finish.
Thomas Crane never saw the library that bears his name. Born on Georges Island in Boston Harbor in 1803, Crane was seven years old when his family moved to Quincy. He was 26 when he left the Quincy granite quarries and went to New York City where he became one of that city’s leading stone contractors, and amassed a fortune in building and real estate.

Even though he had only lived in Quincy for 19 years, Crane’s affection for this city prompted his son Albert Crane, one of eight children, to donate almost a quarter of a million dollars for a library named and endowed in honor of his father. By the time the Thomas Crane Memorial Library opened in 1882, Thomas Crane had been dead for seven years.

In his keynote address at the library’s dedication, Charles Francis Adams Jr. described Thomas Crane as a man remarkable for his unwavering virtue:

“Thomas Crane,” said Adams, preserved, “amid all temptations, his New England birthright traits of simplicity, thrift, straightforward honesty, and deep religious feeling.”

Certainly no one can question Crane’s devotion to hard work and religion. As a child Crane and his five siblings walked four miles each way to school in Quincy. At the age of 15, when his father died, Crane began his apprenticeship in the Quincy granite quarries to help support his family. One of the early adherents to the liberal religious doctrine of Universalism, Crane also used to walk the twenty mile round trip from Quincy to Boston every Sunday to hear Hosea Ballou preaching the tenets of humanitarianism.

“Not that many people seem to know who Thomas Crane is,” says children’s library staff member Gail Columb, opening a Manila folder that bristles with articles she’s collected about the man for whom the library is named. She picks up a grainy picture of Crane’s portrait that hangs in the Trustees Room on the third floor, and studies Crane’s stern but handsome face.

Like many people familiar with the Library’s history, Columb thinks of Crane as one of this city’s native sons. “Most people don’t know that he lived in Quincy Point,” she says. “Even though he was born on Georges Island, he was a real Quincy boy. And even after he left and made a fortune, he was a man who remembered his roots.”
“Some of the brickwork had to be recast, and deliveries of some of the granite on the outside of the building were delayed,” recalls newspaper reporter Lane Lambert, who covers the library for the Patriot Ledger. Work was also slowed down because the construction company had trouble getting full work crews.

But according to Lambert, the most striking thing about the delays wasn’t their length, it was the fact that among politicians and the public, support for the project never wavered.

“There was no division of feeling, and no disenchantment. The library was a project considered worth the extra money and time. It was seen as a real community gathering place. The library is one of the few public institutions left that still draws everybody in.”

While CBT and the construction firm W.T. Rich grappled with building materials and work slowdowns, library officials faced their own challenges. Even though the lion’s share of the funding was in place, McLaughlin and the Library Board of Trustees still had to come up with one million dollars to pay for tables, chairs, benches, carrels, and computers.

“The hardest part of the project was raising that money,” says McLaughlin. But it was the generous response from the community that finally allowed for the completion of one of the largest and most beautiful public libraries in Massachusetts.

“This building has the energies of hundreds of people, all of whose stories make up what this library is,” McLaughlin says, the sun shining in through the open window behind her desk. “I keep going back to the image either of the New England barn raising or the community quilt where everybody gets together at somebody’s house. I feel like that’s what a library is—that it means a lot of different things to people.”

WATCH WHERE YOU’RE WALKING!

Not only was the original Thomas Crane Library built by the most famous architect of the time, its grounds were designed by the most famous landscaper of the time—Frederick Law Olmsted.

“I agree that the scrappy elm in the southwest corner of the Library Grounds should be cut out,” writes Olmsted’s Brookline firm in a 1913 letter to the Library Trustees about landscaping around the Allen addition.

Olmsted is best known for his design of New York City’s Central Park. He also designed the string of green spaces in Boston known as the Emerald Necklace. A frequent collaborator and advisor to architect H.H. Richardson, Frederick Olmsted’s landscape design contributes to the sense that Richardson’s massive stone buildings emerge out of the ground with an energy all their own.

Quincy landscape architect Mary Smith has designed plantings for the new CBT addition that continue the Olmsted tradition of creating a park-like, natural setting for public buildings.

Few public libraries in the country have a more storied history than that of the Thomas Crane Memorial Library, of which the CBT addition is now a major part. That history began in the 1870s with a series of events involving three men, each of whom leaves an enduring legacy in this city:

Quincy native Charles Francis Adams—grandson of second U.S. president John Adams—and chairman of the Quincy Library’s Board of Trustees for 19 years. Albert Crane, whose father Thomas Crane took the money he earned in the Quincy granite quarries to New York City, where he made a fortune investing in real estate. And Henry Hobson Richardson, friend of the Adams family and America’s first celebrity architect.

In 1879, when the city’s library was housed in the vacant
Evangelical Congregational Church on the corner of Hancock and Revere Streets, Charles Francis Adams wrote in his annual report to the Library Board of Trustees that "the great need of this institution is a commodious and better adapted library room, in a more central part of the town."

Adams' hope that such space would come in the form of a building donated to the city was realized only a few months later when Albert Crane, who had never lived in Quincy, contacted Adams about building a library there in memory of his father, Thomas Crane.

The architect that the Crane family chose to design the memorial was Henry Hobson Richardson, then and still regarded as the foremost architect of his era.

"As an architectural monument," says Richardson biographer James O'Gorman, "the Crane Library is as important as anything else in Quincy," including the John Adams Family Mansion, and the United First Parish Church, designed by the famous architect Alexander Parris, where U.S. presidents John Adams and his son John Quincy Adams and their two wives are entombed. "People come to Quincy," says O'Gorman, "just to look at the library."

Even after Adams' tenure as Chair of the Library Board of Trustees ended, the Crane family continued its involvement in the Crane Memorial Library, funding the 1908 addition to the Richardson building, which consisted of an ell, designed by architect William M. Aiken. In addition to creating more space, the wall of stained glass "bookplates" at the end of the Aiken wing allowed in more natural light.

By the 1930s the Library had again outgrown its building. This time the Crane family helped finance a major addition, designed by Boston and Quincy architects Paul and Carroll Coletti, that more than doubled the size of the Thomas Crane Library. Completed in 1939, the Coletti addition

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**Library**

The nation's first public library opened in Peterborough, New Hampshire in 1835. In 1848, legislation was passed to establish such an institution in Boston, and extended to other communities in Massachusetts in 1851. By 1870 there were eighty free public libraries in this state.

1874

The library relocated to the vacant Evangelical Congregational Church at the corner of Hancock Street and Revere Road; this after a possible short residence in Town Hall.

1871

The citizens of Quincy vote at Town Meeting to appropriate $1000 for the salary of a librarian and maintenance of a building, and an additional sum of $2500 on the condition that an equal amount be raised by private subscription. In December, the Quincy Public Library opened in the north room of the Adams Academy Building with a collection of 4,607 volumes.

1880

Town Meeting approved a $20,000 bequest from Albert Crane to erect a public library building as a memorial to his late father, Thomas Crane.

1875

Charles Francis Adams Jr., great grandson of President John Adams, began his nineteen-year chairmanship of the Board of Trustees.
matches the style and building materials of the Richardson building, and boasts bas-relief carvings by the well-known sculptor Joseph A. Coletti.

Throughout this period, Albert Crane kept up a lively correspondence with library officials regarding everything from the placement of artwork and portraits within the library, to comments on the Annual Library Reports and events of the time. In a letter dated 1908, Crane complimented library director George Morton on the Aiken addition. “When prosperity returns,” Crane writes, “and my financial reservoir has begun to receive some rills of revenue, I want to increase a little that fund which you have called by my name if it is not exhausted.”

Even today, the generosity and vision of the Cranes, the Adams, and H.H. Richardson continues to benefit The Thomas Crane Memorial Library and the City of Quincy. The first money down on the CBT addition came from that fund to which Crane referred in his letter. And because it is considered H.H. Richardson’s masterpiece of library design, the original library building will always draw the attention and recognition of art historians, as well as the admiration of ordinary people who appreciate the power and simplicity of its design.

Finally, especially among the people of Quincy, the library’s ties to John and Abigail Adams—both voracious readers whose voices and letters helped define the principles of American democracy—serve as a reminder of how essential books are to an understanding of ourselves and the times in which we live.
OUT OF THE BASEMENT AND INTO THE SPOTLIGHT

From the architects on down, everyone involved in the design of the new addition agreed: creating the children’s room was just plain fun.

“We don’t have the same constraints as we do for the adults,” says Richard Bertman, whose Boston firm of Childs, Bertman and Tseckares—CBT—drew up the expansion plans. “We could be much more imaginative.”

The result is a room that invites children and parents in with a variety of colors, and physical spaces.

“The ceiling isn’t just a flat ceiling,” says Assistant Library Director Jane Granstrom. “It has recognizable shapes—a crescent moon, and clouds,” that are actually suspended from the panels of recessed lighting.

While the overall size of the Thomas Crane Library has roughly doubled with the CBT addition, the new children’s room is nearly three times as large as the old Children’s Library in the basement of the Coletti addition, swelling from 2000 to 6000 square feet.

Circulation of children’s books and lending material has also skyrocketed.

Working closely with library staff, CBT architects have used alcoves and dynamic shelving arrangements to break the space down into age-appropriate sections that are easily visible from the librarians’ desk.

“Toddlers are the picture book crowd,” says Granstrom, who worked as children’s services supervisor for twenty years before becoming the Assistant Director. The book shelves in this section are low enough for a small child to browse.

“When you walk along the outside of the building, you can look in through this wall of windows and see the children reading and playing.”

Individuals and businesses from the community were quick to donate money for other design features, including a storytelling alcove and a play area, both lined with window seats and painted in greens and blues and pale orange. “These ‘naming opportunities’ attracted tremendous interest,” says Granstrom.
On the other side of the room is a reference area with a homework table, and a bank of computers that offer access to the Internet. Right down the center is a zig-zag row of shelving that divides the toddlers from the older children.

The new Children’s Library, named after the late city councilor and school committee member Patricia Toland, has come a long way since 1932, when the collection was moved out of the cramped quarters of the main library into a small cottage on an adjoining lot. Never designed for library purposes, that house had the dual disadvantage of limited shelving space and being separated from the rest of the library.

With the opening of the Coletti building in 1939, the children’s room found a cozy home in the library basement, directly under what is now the Fiction Room. “It was just a place I loved to go,” recalls Diane Cerdrono, who misses the dark woodwork and old fashioned charm of the Coletti Children’s Library. “I came twice a week, and took out three books each time.”

But by the late 1960s the children’s room, like the adult section, was feeling the pinch of inadequate shelving, storage and work areas. And if it was hard for parents with small children and for people with disabilities to climb the outside steps into the main library, says Granstrom, it was even worse making the trek down the narrow stairs to the children’s room. “It was a real handicap for anyone with a child in a stroller.”

Those hardships have vanished. The Patricia Toland Children’s Library is now the first sight that greets visitors coming to the building from the parking lot. And nearly everyone who walks into the room has the same reaction as library patron Maura Middleton: “This is gorgeous! I love it.”

**She Made Every Child Feel Special**

Even Patricia Toland’s political foes liked her. So much so, that the wife of John Quinn, whom Toland had defeated in a hotly contested city council election, helped come up with the idea of naming the new Children’s Library after the only woman in Quincy to serve as president of the City Council.

“Lorraine Quinn said to me, ‘We have to do something for Pat!’” recalls Toland’s close friend Gloria Noble, who decided the most fitting tribute would be to name the new Children’s Library in Toland’s honor.

“What I loved most about Pat was her good humor,” says Noble. “She never complained. She always enjoyed people.”

Especially children. Before serving for 19 years on Quincy’s School Committee and City Council, Toland taught elementary school for eleven years and then stayed at home raising her three children.

“She made every child feel special,” says Noble. “It was that simple.”

Toland’s daughter Elizabeth Bates, also an elementary school teacher, says her mother would have loved the whimsical colors and shapes in the new Children’s Library, where the ceiling is decorated with blue clouds and the purple carpet is patterned with stars and moons.

“It’s a welcoming room for kids,” says Bates, who remembers coming to the library when she was a child. “It has comfortable chairs, alcoves, and these window seats.”

One wall of the play nook is covered with handmade tiles painted and decorated by youngsters from throughout the city. “It’s a tribute to Pat in the Millennium Year,” explains Noble, tapping one brightly glazed picture of a child’s hand.

“She always worked hard to advance kids,” says Mayor Sheets, who welcomed the idea of naming the children’s library after the woman who had also worked for a year as Assistant City Clerk.

Others in the city are just as enthusiastic in their praise. At a fundraiser in 1999 at the Neighborhood Club in Quincy, more than 300 friends and family gathered to remember Toland, who died in 1994, and to donate more than ten thousand dollars to the Children’s Library.

Held on the day that Toland would have turned 67, it was an event that Quincy’s colorful and well liked grande dame of local politics would have enjoyed. “Pat always ran the best parties,” recalls Noble with a smile. “And she always wore high heels—even when she marched in a parade.”
THE CASE OF THE DISAPPEARING PHILOSOPHER

The worst moment in the entire library expansion project came the day that library officials discovered that a rare stained glass window by famed artist John LaFarge—valued at $500,000—had been stolen.

"I felt my heart stop!" Library Director Ann McLaughlin recalls of the moment when she realized that the window was missing from its sash. "I was horrified!"

McLaughlin was even more upset when a thorough search of the library failed to turn up the 30 by 10 inch panel that depicts a seated man reading a book. Called the Old Philosopher, and considered to be one of LaFarge’s finest works, the window had been on display in the original library since 1882.

For one week, the bad news just kept coming: the theft had probably gone undetected for several months because the Old Philosopher window had been hidden from casual sight by plywood during the renovation of the Richardson building; local police and the FBI had no promising leads on such a cold trail; the library was criticized for not having a better security system; art historians bemoaned the loss of a masterpiece.

But on May 9, 2001, in a surprise ending more befitting a Nancy Drew mystery than real life, McLaughlin received an anonymous phone call from a man with a gruff voice: "Write this down! Willow Street, under the Curtis Tomb. You’ll find your window."

First McLaughlin called the police and FBI. Then she telephoned her sister, who was convinced that the caller was directing McLaughlin to Mount Wollaston Cemetery, where the lanes are all named after trees.

Her sister’s hunch was right. They found the window wrapped in a black plastic trash bag stuffed under the grating of the tomb. "We grabbed it!" says McLaughlin. "I put it on my sister’s lap and drove away."

The Old Philosopher is not the only LaFarge window at the library to disappear mysteriously and then reemerge. Back in 1998, when library staff was preparing for the construction of the CBT addition, they discovered a long-lost panel that depicts the Greek symbol alpha, tucked into a crate of old clear windows in a library supply closet.

Missing since 1938, the stained glass window matches a similar library window that is decorated with the Greek symbol omega. Now that all three windows are accounted for, library officials hope to display them as LaFarge intended, with the alpha and omega panels flanking the old philosopher panel as symbols of the endlessness of man’s quest for knowledge.

Famed artist John LaFarge created the “Old Philosopher” stained glass window in the Richardson building as a memorial to Thomas Crane. Made up of more than 1000 pieces of glass and valued at half a million dollars, the 30 by 10 inch panel is considered a masterpiece. At the left of the fireplace in the Richardson building is another LaFarge window, “Angel at the Tomb,” given in memory of Thomas Crane’s son, Benjamin Franklin Crane.
The CBT addition is 56,000 square feet.

- The exterior is made of red slate, granite, brick, and cast stone that simulates brownstone.
- Exterior metal balconies, arches, and trim are designed to recall and repeat similar shapes and features of the Richardson and Coletti buildings.
- Interior building material includes mahogany woodwork, Indian slate floors, and granite topped desks.
THE RIGHT THING TO DO

For many library patrons, it's their favorite space: the old reading room in the Coletti Building, now transfigured with the addition of an interior balcony overlooking the new atrium, and a coat of deep yellow paint on the vaulted ceiling.

The “Fiction Room”—as it is now called—has a whole new look. The beautiful, long wooden tables are still there, polished to a dull gleam. But the overcrowded periodical display, the racks holding newspapers on wooden spindles, and the metal stands packed with dog-eared paperbacks are gone. In their place are deep armchairs, small round tables, and dense carpet.

The renovation and transformation of this room is the gift of the late Dr. Paul Ossen, who made the single largest individual contribution to the library expansion project. Dr. Ossen, who made arrangements for the gift in 1995, died before the new addition was finished. He donated the money in his name and that of his wife Bernice, who died in 1995.

“He did it because it was the right thing to do,” says his son Richard, who helped his father plan the bequest to the library. “He felt strongly that we have to educate our young people. He worried that kids didn’t read enough.”

Dr. Ossen also paid for the construction of the new Browsing Room directly across from the old reading room. Here, patrons can choose from the newest in fiction and nonfiction. They can also pick out music, movies, documentaries, books on tape, and sit in comfortable chairs while they look through an entire wall of paperbacks, mysteries, thrillers, westerns, and romances.

“Dr. Ossen was adamant about wanting to give something old and something new,” says Library Director Ann McLaughlin.

Visitors to both rooms might recognize Dr. Paul Ossen’s name from his 39 years as an internist here in Quincy. “If he wasn’t the last doctor to give up house calls, he was close,” recalls Richard.

The library isn’t the only institution to benefit from the Ossens’ commitment to education. With as little public fanfare as possible, the family has also contributed to the Boston University Medical Library, Dartmouth College, and the University of Massachusetts.

Dr. Ossen died four years ago at the age of 80. “I miss him,” says Richard, leaning against a bookshelf in the Browsing Room that is named after his parents. “I miss him a lot.”
"I Love Public Libraries"

Pulitzer Prize-winning historian David McCullough is not in the habit of giving free lectures, or reading to the public from one of his works in progress. But McCullough, whose new biography of Quincy native and second U.S. president John Adams now tops the N.Y. Times nonfiction best seller list, bent his usual rules when he hosted a gala fund-raiser for the new library addition on a cool evening in early June 2000.

"I felt so strongly that the library in Quincy especially deserves support," says McCullough, in a warm voice familiar to many who have heard him narrate documentaries on public television.

"This is the hometown of the man who signed legislation that created the Library of Congress. He was the most widely and deeply read man of his day, whose wife loved books as much as he did—who together raised one of the most literate and articulate men in history."

Quincy's elected officials and community leaders, along with 150 history buffs, paid $50 dollars each to hear McCullough speak about John Adams and read from his then-unfinished manuscript. Some, like Lions Club members Brenda and John Reed, paid $500 dollars for the additional privilege of chatting with McCullough before the lecture over wine and hors d'oeuvres served in the Richardson building.

"He was unbelievable," says Brenda Reed, whose husband John helped the Lions Club raise money for the new library's special equipment room for the visually impaired. "He made early American history sound like current events."

Reed wasn't the only one who was impressed. "It's interesting to see dozens of city councilors and business people dropping their usual sense of status, and lining up to get their books signed," says newspaper reporter Lane Lambert, who covered McCullough's speech for the Patriot Ledger. "It was definitely a celebrity event."

H.H. Richardson designed the furniture for the original Thomas Crane Memorial Library. Some of that furniture is on the second floor of the CBT addition in the Trustees Room, while other pieces remain in public use.
THANK YOU

Evidence of the community’s strong commitment to the building campaign is everywhere in the building. The restoration of the reading rooms on the second floor was paid for by a prominent Quincy family physician, Paul Ossen. The computer classroom was made possible by a generous donation from Boston Financial Data Services, which also provides popular training courses. Quincy Mutual Fire Insurance Company funded the Quincy History Room and the City of Presidents Golf Tournament raised funds for furnishings in the Children’s Room.

The Central Atrium and Richardson Fireplace was supported by Ian Mackenzie, and Robert L. Fischer, Jr. donated funds for the porch, foyer and grand staircase. In honor of Francis X. Bellotti, many lawyers throughout the state contributed to the law library, which was named for this prominent Quincy attorney. The business collection was made possible by a donation from Dana Ahearn, a Quincy businessman. Harry and Louisa Beebe funded the young adults’ room and the O’Connell family supported the story room. Friends and family of Patricia Toland raised money to dedicate the Children’s Room in her memory.

State Street Foundation contributed to the Richardson Building Restoration, John Andrews and family provided funds for the grand window, and the Quincy Lions Club raised money for the Lions (Quiet Study) Room. Enjoy a bite to eat at the café and you will notice Rona Goodman donated its space. As you browse throughout the library, you will notice chairs, benches, tables and rooms with plaques representing well over 100 donors.

It is with grateful appreciation that we say thank you to the following list of donors.
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