

The Origins of the Weeks Public Library:

On June 5, 1897, Mary Holmes, Greenland columnist for the Portsmouth Journal, broke the news that the town's small circulating library would soon have a permanent home. She reported a plan to build a library on land owned by the Clough estate just to the north of the Methodist church on Post Road.

What she did not reveal was the source of money for the library's construction. Even when the Evening Gazette reported that, on July 27th, ground had been broken for the basement of the new library., it noted that the donor preferred to remain anonymous. According to Portsmouth Library Treasurer Charles A. Hazelett, funds had been deposited with him sufficient to cover the new library's construction.

By August 24 the granite foundation was almost complete. The walls built of pressed-brick, were laid by local mason George Duntley according to the plans of Albert C. Anderson of the Anderson & Junkins contracting firm, based on the design of Charles A. Hazlett. Mr. Hazlett also chose the furnishings for the new library and supervised its construction.

The new library structure was completed by January 15, 1898. The next step was acceptance of the donation by town meeting. The resolutions passed by the town that year included official recognition that Mrs. Caroline A. Weeks had erected and furnished a library building which she offered to donate to the town of Greenland.

She proposed four conditions to the donation:

1. that the buildings and grounds be only used for the purposes of a free public library and public reading room;
2. that the donor have the right of name one of the library trustees, as authorized by state law;
3. that the town appropriate enough money to pay a librarian and heat and light the building, as well as pay the sum required by state law for library purposes; and
4. that the library be open at least one afternoon and one evening a week.

The town grateful accepted the "very handsome gift" from Mrs. Weeks and adopted the conditions stipulated. The citizens also voted to appropriate \$150 in addition to the funds required by state law. The formal dedication of the building took place on May 19, 1898. The library opened for business two days later.

Architecturally, Weeks Public Library is a gem of the Colonial Revival movement that swept New Hampshire at the end of the nineteenth century. Hazlett, a banker by profession and

library activist by choice, worked closely with Mrs. Weeks to design a building that fit the idea of American colonial revival architecture: pronounced classical portico, symmetrical form, and solid construction of brick, stone and slate. Today, the building is still an active and beautiful tribute to Greenland's history.

The new library brought together several strands of Greenland New Hampshire and American history. The memorial building honors one of Greenland's and New Hampshire's oldest and most prominent families. The library's location stands in the middle, physically and chronologically, of a row of historic public buildings on the Old Post Road: the Congregational church (1756), the former Methodist church (1837), and Greenland Central School (1924).

The building itself is bright in daytime with large windows on all sides and, at night, well-lit with a large brass chandelier over the spacious reading room. The library has both a heating furnace and an attractive fireplace. Mrs. Weeks' gift of the library immediately gained the support of Greenland's townspeople, who responded by quadrupling the town's annual funding to run the library. Thus, combining private money, civic leadership, and public support made Greenland's first public library a reality.

Information compiled and presented by Mark Willis.