

Treasure Room Finding Aid

Lucius Beebe Memorial Library
Wakefield, Massachusetts

Summary

Date(s): ca. 1839-present day

Quantity: ~80 linear feet + large format storage

Note: Access to Finding Aid record on the library's [website](#).

Preferred Citation: Lucius Beebe Memorial Library

Acquisition Information

Provenance: Materials in the Town of Wakefield collection consist of donations (e.g. town photographs) and ongoing collections that are managed by library staff (e.g. WHS yearbooks). The local history collection development policy clarifies donation parameters...Materials in the Lucius Beebe Memorial Library Collection consist of items created by or related to the library and/or its staff.

Processing: 2026 Amanda DeRosa

Terms of Access

Researchers seeking to examine archival materials are strongly encouraged to make an appointment. Materials in the Treasure Room are not available to check out of the library.

Terms of Use

The copyright is held by The Lucius Beebe Memorial Library. The copyright on some materials in the collection may be held by the original author or the author's heirs or assigns. Photocopies may be made at the discretion of the library staff.

Historical Note

Wakefield's first public library was established in 1856 by a committee consisting of B.F. Tweed, Lilley Eaton, Fred A. Sawyer, J.M. Evans, George O. Carpenter, and James Oliver. The old Town House, overlooking the Common, was its original location. The following year, Town Meeting appropriated \$300 to buy books and pay the salary of a librarian. Lucius Beebe was the first chairman of the Board of Library Trustees. The first librarian, from 1856 to 1857, was Henry E. Eaton. He was followed by Miss E.M. Newhall, who served until 1859, by which time the library held 1,678 volumes.

In 1868 the library moved to the new Town Hall, at the corner of Main and Water Streets, which had been donated by Cyrus Wakefield, after whom the town is named. Lucius Beebe donated \$500 toward the purchase of new books, which at the time was nearly equal to the annual salary of a typical laborer. That year the Town Meeting honored him by voting to change the library's name to "Beebe Town Library of Wakefield". Miss Victorine E. Marsh had been appointed librarian in 1868 and she served until 1885 when she resigned due to ill health and was replaced by Mrs. Harriet A. Shepard. In 1904 a branch library headed by Miss H. Gertrude Lee was opened in a room at the Greenwood School.

As the library grew, it became necessary to relocate and expand. In 1916, the townspeople purchased a lot at the corner of Main and Avon Streets for \$16,000. That same year, Junius Beebe, son of Lucius Beebe, donated \$60,000 (average annual salaries at that time were around \$700) toward the construction of a new library building, to be built in memory of his parents, Lucius and Sylenda. The cornerstone was laid on March 17, 1922 and the building was dedicated on April 14, 1923. The architect for the 1922 building was Ralph Adams Cram, of the firm Cram & Ferguson, arguably America's best Gothic architect, as well as a writer, and art critic for the Boston Transcript. Cram's most famous works include several buildings at Princeton University, including the chapel, and more than one hundred churches and chapels across the country. He also was the principal architect of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City and was a consulting architect for the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. The Beebe Library building was a departure from his usual Gothic work, having been built in a Classical Revival style instead.

The building has a large skylit entrance hall flanked by two reading rooms, each up a short flight of marble stairs. The north reading room is graced by fourteen medallions depicting famous literary figures. Both reading rooms include working marble fireplaces, built-in wooden bookshelves, and elegant Adam style plaster detailing on the walls and ceilings. The central lobby has a black and white marble floor and cast iron stair railings with urn motifs that echo the stone urns on the building's facade. The beehive, a symbol of the Beebe family, is used throughout the building as a decorative motif, and was chosen in 1998 as the Library's logo. In 1942 a second branch library was opened in the Montrose school on the northeast side of town. Four years later it was moved to its own building on New Salem Street. For past and current building photos, please visit our Digital Heritage collection.

In 1967 the town appropriated funds to expand the original building, which was becoming overcrowded. An addition was designed by James F. Clapp, Jr., of the Boston architectural firm Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson, and Abbot. The addition was opened on September 14, 1969. The two branch libraries in Montrose and Greenwood were closed in 1981 due to the effects of mandated budget cuts under Proposition 2 1/2. That same year Wakefield became one of the five founding member towns of the North of Boston Library Exchange, one of the first automated library systems in Massachusetts.

By the late 1980s, Beebe Library had again outgrown its space. New library technologies as well as expanding collections prompted a study into the feasibility of renovating the existing building to provide added space, particularly in the Youth Room, new utility systems, and handicapped accessibility. In November 1995, Wakefield's Town Meeting approved a \$5 million renovation to the Beebe Library, with \$3.2 million to be funded by the town and \$1.8 million from a construction grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. The challenge was to achieve these goals in the existing structure while retaining the beauty of the historic portion of the building.

The Boston architectural firm of Childs Bertman Tseckares was hired to redesign the building and work with the Library Building Committee and library staff to bring to fruition the goals of the building program, which gutted the 1969 portion of the building and restored the historic 1922 portion. Castagna, Inc. was hired as the general contractor, and the entire project was overseen by the project management firm, the Carlisle Consulting Group. Cheryl Webb

Scott, a local interior designer, donated her services to the project to design interiors and select furniture, fabrics, carpets, and color schemes.

Before construction could begin in October 1996, the entire library had to vacate the Main Street site and move to temporary quarters at the Lakeside Office Park. These temporary offices were generously provided at no charge to the town by the Savings Bank of Wakefield for the duration of the construction period. The move took three weeks and the “Library at Lakeside” reopened to the public the second week in October, 1996. Construction on the Main Street building was substantially completed in January 1998, and the library moved back to its beautifully renovated historic building during the month of February. The rededication festivities took place on Sunday, March 15th, 1998, and the next day the library reopened to the public.

Money for furnishings was not part of the project’s funding. At the 1995 Town Meeting, the Board of Library Trustees made a commitment to raise \$200,000 through private fundraising. This private money was earmarked to furnish the new building properly and to provide extras not included in construction. The “Furnish Our Future” campaign ultimately raised more than \$240,000 from scores of individuals and community groups to purchase comfortable upholstered seating, custom-made computer and study carrels, solid cherry tables, specialty shelving, and custom-designed furnishings for the Youth Room. In addition, many of the library’s original antique furnishings were refinished and reupholstered to be reused in their original settings.

Now over 150 years old, Beebe Library is known not only as an architectural gem of the town, but an active and vital part of the community, serving as an educational and cultural institution and meeting place. Library staff are active in professional and community groups and take pride in Beebe Library’s excellent and innovative public service.

Scope and Content

Archival materials are split into two collections: the Town of Wakefield Collection and the Lucius Beebe Memorial Library Collection. The bulk of the Town of Wakefield Collection contains town histories, street lists, town reports, and town publications (ca. 1839-present). The bulk of the Lucius Beebe Memorial Library Collection contains Beebe Family materials, library building plans, library reports and ephemera (ca. 1857-present).

Arrangement

Boxes containing Town of Wakefield materials have the town logo. Boxes containing Lucius Beebe Memorial Library materials have the library skep logo. Additional materials related to the town are located in the Local History Room. Additional materials related to the library are located in the large format cabinet on the bridge/balcony area above the main lobby.

Town of Wakefield Collection

Collected Town Directories

Box 1 (1869-1887)
Box 2 (1888-1895)
Box 3 (1896-1901)
Box 4 (1902-1905)
Box 5 (1907-1912)
Box 6 (1913-1916)
Box 7 (1917-1920)
Box 8 (1921-1925)
Box 9 (1931-1934)
Box 10 (1936-1938)
Box 11 (1941, 1962)
Box 12 (1964-1966)

Street Listings

Box 1 (1850-1919)
Box 2 (1921-1926)
Box 3 (1927-1931)
Box 4 (1932-1937)
Box 5 (1938-1945)
Box 6 (1946-1955)
Box 7 (1956-1964)
Box 8 (1965-1973)
Box 9 (1974-1981)
Box 10 (1982-1989)
Box 11 (1990-1994)
Box 12 (1995-2000)
Box 13 (2001-2006)
Box 14 (2007-2012)
Box 15 (2013-2018)
Box 16 (2019-2023)

Wakefield & Reading Vital Records to 1850

“The Town Book” Wakefield Guide & Directory 1961-1991

Bound Wakefield Town Reports (Compiled)

1839-1869
1846-1868
1868-1875
1875-1881
1881-1884
1875-1881
1882-1886
1885-1889
1887-1891

1890-1898
1892-1886
1894-1896
1896-1899
1897-1899
1900-1902
1900-1902
1903-1905
1903-1905
1905-1907
1908-1910
1906-1909
1909-1912
1911-1913
1913-1916
1917-1920
1921-1924
1925-1928
1929-1932
1933-1937

Wakefield Town Reports

Box 1 (1914-1928)
Box 2 (1938-1944)
Box 3 (1945-1951)
Box 4 (1952-1959)
Box 5 (1960-1967)
Box 6 (1968-1974)
Box 7 (1975-1981)
Box 8 (1982-1990)
Box 9 (1991-1999)
Box 10 (2000-2009)
Box 11 (2010-2016)
Box 12 (2017-2025)

Zoning By-Laws 1843-2002

Maps & Properties 1924-2001

Town Committee Reports

Box 1 (1864-1925)
Box 2 (1925-1979)
Box 3 (1980-2000)
Box 4 (2001-2005)

Town History (Early Correspondence, Written Histories)

Town Celebrations (1844-1994)

Town Clubs & Societies

Wakefield History Books

- Box 1 (Genealogical History, 1874)
- Box 2 (Handbook of Wakefield, 1885)
- Box 3 (250th Anniversary, 1896)
- Box 4 (Wakefield Family Genealogy, 1897)
- Box 5 (History of Ancient Redding, 1935)
- Box 6 (1923, 1944, 1997)
- Box 7 (2000–)

Town Publications

- Box 1
- Box 2 (Postcards)

Wakefield Municipal Gas & Light Calendars

Town Media

- Box 1
- Box 2

Town Photos

- Box 1
- Box 2 *Horizontal Box

Wakefield Residents

- Box 1 (Notable people in Wakefield's History)
- Box 2 (Artists) *Large Format Horizontal Box

School Committee Reports

- Box 1 (1835, 1860)
- Box 2 (1860-1977)
- Box 3 (1990-2006)

WAK Schools Publications, Ephemera, Correspondence

Galvin Middle School

WHS Publications 1889-1931

WHS Yearbooks

- Box 1 (1908-1939)
- Box 2 (1940-1945)
- Box 3 (1946-1950)

Box 4 (1951-1956)
Box 5 (1957-1963)
Box 6 (1964-1968)
Box 7 (1969-1973)
Box 8 (1974-1978)
Box 9 (1979-1983)
Box 10 (1984-1989)
Box 11 (1990-1995)
Box 12 (1996-2001)
Box 13 (2002-2006)
Box 14 (2007-2011)
Box 15 (2012-2017)
Box 16 (2018-2023)
Box 17 (2024—)

Our Lady of Nazareth Academy

Box 1 (Our Lady of Nazareth Yearbooks 1962-1999)
Box 2 (Our Lady of Nazareth Yearbooks 2000-2009)

Church History

Box 1 (Churches by name)
Box 3 (Bound)
Box 3 (First Parish, bound)
Box 4 (Music book)

Old Burial Ground

Environmental Reports

Box 1 (1939-1986)
Box 2 (1991-2007, nd)
Box 3 (Veterans Field Report 2001)

Military History

Box 1
Box 2 (Air raid wardens)
Box 3 (Richardson Light Guard)
Box 4 (Bound)
Box 5 (Isaac E. Green letters) *Horizontal box

Business & Industry

Box 1 (Wicker)
Box 2 (Railway, etc.)

Wakefieldopoly

Lucius Beebe Memorial Library Collection

Beebe Trowel (Library cornerstone-laying)

Beebe Family Album

Beebe Family

- Box 1 (Family history, correspondence)
- Box 2 (Lucius M. Beebe)
- Box 3 (Lucius Beebe of Wakefield by Louise Beebe Wilder, 1930)
- Box 4 (Lucius Morris Beebe, Seeing the Elephant by Y, Jean Stephens, 1972)

Lucius M. Beebe Publications

- Box 1
- Box 2
- Box 3
- Box 4
- Box 5
- Flat Folder (LIFE Magazine, 1939)
- Flat Folder (Town & Country, 1962)

Library Building

- Box 1 (Sketches & plans)
- Box 2 (Early history)
- Box 3 (1960s renovation)
- Box 4 (1990s renovation)
- Box 5 (1990s grant applications)

Library Reports

- Box 1 (Stats & surveys)
- Box 2 (Trustees reports 1856-1941)
- Box 3 (Trustees reports 1910-1929)
- Box 4 (Trustees reports 1930-1949)
- Box 5 (Trustees reports 1950-1959)
- Box 6 (Trustees reports 1960-1974)
- Box 7 (Trustees reports 1975-1983)
- Box 8 (Trustees reports 1984-1989)
- Box 9 (Trustees reports 1989-1995)

Library Catalogs

- Box 1 (1857-1936)
- Box 2 (1874) *Horizontal box
- Box 3 (1887) *Horizontal box
- Box 4 (1887) *Horizontal box

Flat Folder (Cutter Alphabetic Order Table)

Library Programs & Ephemera

Box 1

Box 2

Bookplates

Box 1

Box 2

Library accession book 1897-1917

Library donation book 1885-1923

Library book embossers

Library publications & recognitions

Box 1

Flat Folder (Architecture Magazine, 1924)

Library photos

Box 1

Box 2 (ca. 1990s)

Box 3 (slides)

Box 4 (negatives)

Balcony storage

Library plans and blueprints ca.1960s-1990s