

**Village of Lynbrook
Preliminary Information Form
State and National Register Proposal**

Lynbrook Library



Submitted to



New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation

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The Lynbrook Library

The Lynbrook Library, located in this Long Island, New York community at 56 Eldert Street was designed by world renowned architect Hugh Tallant and opened on October 19, 1929. Its neoclassical style echos the era of the Carnegie Libraries in its emphasis on classical elements and symbolism in the tradition of grand civic structures. However, the Library is more than a physical building; it is a gathering place and repository of resources for the community that owes its beginnings to the dedication and efforts of its founders having roots in the woman's suffragette movement.

The Suffragette Movement

We can trace the origins of the Lynbrook Library to an era of important social change represented by the development of women's organizations, the education of women, and its impact on society. The women's club movement (1890 to 1920) originated in female benevolent and church societies, maternal associations, and sewing and reading circles in the early-to-mid 1800s. Through their charitable outreach, these groups learned organizational and fund-raising skills, as well as engaged in discussion of moral and social reform. (Kupfner, 183-186)

Recently there has been an interest in the history of libraries and the role played by women's associations in establishing libraries. Many of the women responsible for establishing the Lynbrook Library also played an important role in the suffrage movement in Lynbrook and nearby East Rockaway. Miss Amelia Davison, member of a prominent early East Rockaway family, and at one time an ardent campaigner for women's suffrage, was active during the women's suffrage movement when she and her two sisters, Miss Irene Davison and the late Susan Davison, both of this village, organized bands of suffragists on Long Island. (*NYTimes*, 1937, Jul 13)

In 1933 the American Library Association announced that seventy-five percent of public libraries then in existence owed their creation to women, yet this is rarely mentioned. (Scott, 21)

Women's clubs and volunteer associations played a major role in the establishment of public libraries in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, coinciding with the beginnings of the women's suffrage movement starting in 1848 when Elizabeth Stanton Cady and four other women, dissatisfied by the role of women in society and lack of personal rights and privileges, called for a Women's rights convention to discuss the social, civil, and religious conditions, and the rights of women. The Women's Rights Convention was held in the Wesleyan Chapel at Seneca Falls July 19th and 20th 1848. Those two days are considered to be the official beginning of the women's rights movement which ultimately resulted in the issuance of the Declaration of Sentiments signed by sixty-eight women and thirty-two men. It called for among other things, right of women to vote. Two Long Islanders were among those at the convention- Lucretia and James Mott. (Petrash, 11-12) Although Long Island was a long way from Seneca Falls, women of Long Island were disproportionately responsible for the success of the women's suffrage movement. (Petrash, 13)

Lynbrook Library, like many public libraries, has its roots in local women's clubs. It was a women's literary group that conceived of and operated the first library in Lynbrook. A Founders Committee of twelve Lynbrook women from the Old Friday Club led by Mrs. Orrell Hancock obtained contributions of 500 books and opened a library in Mechanics Hall on Blake Avenue. Women had already organized literary societies and a women's suffrage club among other civic clubs. In 1906 the Southside Observer announced that the women's literary organization, the Friday Club planned to open a "free library". The women discussed with Treadwell Abrams, a local businessman, the use of part of his unoccupied store on Atlantic Avenue, which they planned to stock with books, however the financial panic of 1907 postponed this and it took seven more years to organize the first library. (Mattson, 103)

The Lynbrook Library was the site of historic events in the suffrage movement. In the 1914 budget vote the women of Lynbrook placed posters in the library on Atlantic Avenue urging women to vote and women's organizations such as the Friday Club and the Dorcas Circle lobbied their members to vote. Although their votes fell slightly short of matching the men this is considered a resounding success since many women simply could not get out because of their duties at home. (Mattson, 106)

In December 1914, the *South Side Observer* newspaper announced that the library, now named the Lynbrook Free Library Association had acquired additional books and was located in the Ronalds Building on the west side of Atlantic Avenue. In 1915 the library rented larger quarters, also on Atlantic Avenue, occupying half of the double store owned by a Mr. Talfor.

Louise Wright, daughter of George Wright became leader in the South Side Political Equality League (SSPEL), a suffrage organization. She formed a Lynbrook chapter with Irene, SJ, and Amelia Davison. Another leader was Philomene Charpentier (Mattson, 106), wife of Lynbrook's French chef and restaurant owner Henri, creator of the Crepe Suzette in 1895. The restaurant also became the site of many meetings for the group. According to the *New Era*, a local newspaper, the Lynbrook Library was at the heart of the Women's Suffrage movement in 1915. On February 12, 1915, a large audience gathered in the public library to listen to Mrs. Doane, Nassau County's woman lawyer who made an address relating child labor and the necessity of the women's vote to eliminate child labor. Suffragists assembled a display of dolls in the library representing the twelve states and territories and five countries in which women can vote. (Mattson, 107)

The *Southside Observer* and *New Era* reported Lynbrook suffragettes' mid-day marches on Hempstead and Atlantic Avenue. On July 1, 1913 the Village Board gave permission to Ms. Davison to hold a suffragette meeting on Atlantic Avenue. President Wright himself attended the rally. Finally in 1920 the Nineteenth Amendment gave women the right to vote. (Mattson, 107) By 1915 realizing the civic value of the library, the Village Board voted to subsidize the library expenses with \$300 annually and renamed it the Lynbrook Public Library. When the library again needed to relocate, the Founders organized a fund-raising drive through card parties, cake sales, and donations for a down payment on half of a small building on Broadway which the library occupied from 1921 until 1929. The Village Board progressively increased its annual "bounty" to \$1,500. The twelve women of the Founders, all volunteers, ran the library for the first ten years working in pairs on a monthly rotation until 1924 when a salaried librarian, Mrs. M.F. Cook was hired and the Library was then constructed in 1929 at its present location on Eldert Street. It was built by Morgan, Coblentz Construction Company on land donated by Thomas F. O'Connor and Treadwell Carpenter. A rear extension was constructed in 1992. The contributions of the dedicated volunteers throughout the early years of the Library made it all possible. Although the 1929 official history of the library understated the inspiration and hard work of Lynbrook's women, the 1920s did show signs that things were changing in the traditional roles that society assigned to the sexes. The library was and continues to be an integral part of the community, and as such continues to change and grow to reflect its ever-evolving needs while reflecting on its historical significance to society.

The Architecture

The Lynbrook Library displays the signature Carnegie elements of elevated formal entrance welcoming patrons to enter through a prominent doorway, accessed via a staircase. The entry

staircase symbolized a person's elevation by learning. Similarly, outside virtually every library was a lamppost or lantern to symbolize enlightenment; two cast iron lampposts help define this grand entryway, as one approaches the footsteps of the Lynbrook Library.

(https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Carnegie_library)

Large fluted Ionic columns with volutes on top flank the front door and extend to the entablature. The frieze is inscribed "LYNBROOK PUBLIC LIBRARY" - rosette on either side of inscription. In the pediment a recessed curved frame with the carved bust of Athena, the goddess of wisdom and war wearing a helmet, represented with her symbolic snakes and carved acanthus leaves at base. The Neoclassical building is grand in scale, balanced and geometric with large arched windows inspired by the signature style of Carnegie Libraries.

(https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Carnegie_library)

Andrew Carnegie (November 25, 1835 – August 11, 1919) was a Scottish-born American businessman, a major philanthropist, and the founder of the Carnegie Steel Company which later became U.S. Steel. He is known for having built one of the most powerful and influential corporations in United States history, and, later in his life, giving away most of his riches to fund the establishment of many libraries, schools, and universities in Scotland, America, and worldwide. (https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Andrew_Carnegie)

A Carnegie Library is a library built with money donated by Andrew Carnegie. Since its inception in 1865 a total of 2,509 Carnegie libraries were built between 1883 and 1929, including some belonging to public and university library systems. The first of Carnegie's public libraries opened in his hometown, Dunfermline, Scotland in 1883. As with most of the others, Carnegie's name did not appear on the building. Rather, he had a motto—"Let there be light"—inscribed over the entrance. His first library in the United States was built in 1889 in Braddock, Pennsylvania, home to one of the Carnegie Steel Company's mills. The last public library funded through Carnegie's generosity was the Wyoming Branch, completed in 1930 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The Carnegie philosophy was that support of industrious individual achievement leads to the betterment of the individual, the community, and society as a whole. His legacy lives on not only in the hundreds of libraries he established but in those inspired by his ideals. As an institution unique to each community, the library reflects the community and ongoing community support and involvement is a fundamental component.

In the early twentieth century, a Carnegie Library was the most imposing structure in hundreds of small American communities. Most of the library buildings were unique, displaying a number of different Beaux-Arts and other architectural styles, including Italian Renaissance, Baroque,

Classical Revival and Spanish Colonial. Each style was chosen by the community and was typically simple and formal, welcoming patrons to enter through a prominent doorway, nearly always accessed via a staircase. The entry staircase symbolized a person's elevation by learning. Similarly, outside virtually every library was a lamppost or lantern to symbolize enlightenment. (https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Carnegie_library)

Nearly all of Carnegie's libraries were built according to "The Carnegie Formula," which required matching from the town that received the donation. Andrew Carnegie believed that the greatest contribution residents could make was to support a public library. He provided capital funding to build the initial library buildings, but intentionally resisted the notion of endowing the library's ongoing operations. He believed strongly that financial support from residents was the most effective way to maintain a strong relationship between the community and its library. (<https://www.carnegielibrary.org/about/history-of-carnegie-library-of-pittsburgh/>)

Each Carnegie library had a separate and intentional design in an effort to construct a landmark. These libraries reflect a role in the vast social changes that occurred at the turn of the century, which include women's suffrage, museum development, the movies, the budding labor movements, education, philanthropy, and other vital issues." — Theodore Jones (<https://www.worldcat.org/title/carnegie-libraries-across-america-a-public-legacy/oclc/606100463?referer=di&ht=edition#borrow>)

Although most communities including Lynbrook had collections of library materials prior to the Carnegie era, the idea of a grand structure creating a sense of permanence in a central location in the community along with other prominent buildings came about in the early 20th Century. Access to all and open stacks, a hallmark of the Carnegie design, provide the opportunity to explore the library on their own. (<https://www.nps.gov/articles/carnegie-libraries-the-future-made-bright-teaching-with-historic-places.htm>)

Architect Hugh Tallant, (1869-1952)

The Lynbrook Public Library was designed by renowned architect Hugh Tallant. He was born in Nantucket and attended Ecole des Beaux-Arts on Harvard's Kirkland fellowship, where he won the 1896 Grande Medaille d'Honneur for graduating first in the class at Harvard, and met his future partner, Henry B. Herts. They opened offices in Paris and New York in 1900. Tallant focused on the decorative design of their projects and Herts the engineering. Their works include the New Amsterdam Theatre, the Lyceum Theatre, the Liberty Theatre (1904, for Klaw

& Erlanger), the Gaiety (1909, now the Victoria), the Folies-Bergere (1911, later the Fulton and now the Helen Hayes), and the Brooklyn Academy of Music (1908). The partners were also talented acousticians, and Tallant wrote extensively on the subject.

Aside from design - careful attention to fireproof construction and extensive stage facilities were other hallmarks of Herts & Tallant theatres. Tallant also wrote a series of articles on "The American Theater: Its Antecedents and Characteristics." As an architect Tallant was especially anxious to understand the precedents offered by Greek, Roman, and Renaissance theaters and to incorporate these precedents into the firm's designs. The firm dissolved in 1911, and each partner went on to other architectural associations.

(<http://smedia.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/lp/1026.pdf>)

Tallant also served as a army captain in World War I and worked on his own after the war, retained by the Village of Lynbrook to design the Library on October 22, 1928 for a fee of 6% of the cost of construction.

Several buildings by Tallant have achieved landmark status- some examples- In NYPL collection landmark reports for these NYC buildings by Herts and Tallant

Lyceum Theatre, 149-157 West 45th Street, Borough of Manhattan : completed 1903, architects Herts & Tallant : [report]. 1974 AA735 N4 ZL981 F- offsite New York (N.Y.). Landmarks Preservation Commission.

New Amsterdam Theatre, Forty-Second Street, New York City : opened October 26, 1903 : architects, Herts and Tallant. Text, Alameda, Calif. : Theatre Historical Society, 1978. Performing Arts research collections- Theatre, MWED (NY) 90-3086

Isaac L. Rice Mansion, 346 West 89th Street, Borough of Manhattan : built 1901-03 : architects Herts & Tallant : [report] / Landmarks Preservation Commission. Text, New York, N.Y. : The Commission, 1980.

New Amsterdam Theatre : Forty-Second Street, New York City : opened October 26, 1903 : architects, Herts and Tallant ... / by Joel Lobenthal [and others]. Text, Alameda, Calif. : Theatre Historical Society, 1978. PN2277.N52 N47 offsite

Commission. Text, New York, N.Y. : The Commission, 1996. AA735 N4 ZN4233 offsite

In addition to exterior architecture Hugh Tallant designed interiors and furnishings.
<https://www.archinform.net/arch/32344.htm>

Armchair, circa 1903, designed by Henry Beaumont Herts and Hugh Tallant, from the New Amsterdam Theater smoking club, New York City.

Theatrical masks: <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/artists/14081/objects>

<https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/82979>

Examples of residential designs by Herts and Tallant achieving landmark status- Three residences in Manhattan: <https://www.landmarkwest.org/architect/herts-and-tallant/>

https://www.nypl.org/research/research-catalog/search?q=herts%20and%20tallant&search_scope=title

Summary

The Lynbrook Library represents an important era in our nation's history reflecting the changes that occurred at the turn of the century, which include women's suffrage, industrialization, changing demographics, and increased awareness of education.

The role of the women on the Founders Committee who were instrumental in the establishment of the Library is of historical significance to the Library and village. Many of the same women who worked to create the Lynbrook Library were also at the heart of Lynbrook's Women's Suffrage movement- victorious in granting a woman's right to vote.

The impressive space of the Lynbrook Library reflects the tradition of the Carnegie Libraries both in its philosophy of community support and involvement and in its remarkable presence and classical style, as designed by the well celebrated architect Hugh Tallent, designer of many historic landmarked Theatres, Residences and other buildings and furnishings.

The association of this Library to the woman's suffragette movement, its distinctive Carnegie neoclassical features, and master architect Hugh Tallent - designer of many historic buildings, has been well articulated in this narrative to satisfy the objectives and criteria for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

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[ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3A9638ab10e87c69a757a398bde3139af6](https://www.jstor.org/ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3A9638ab10e87c69a757a398bde3139af6)

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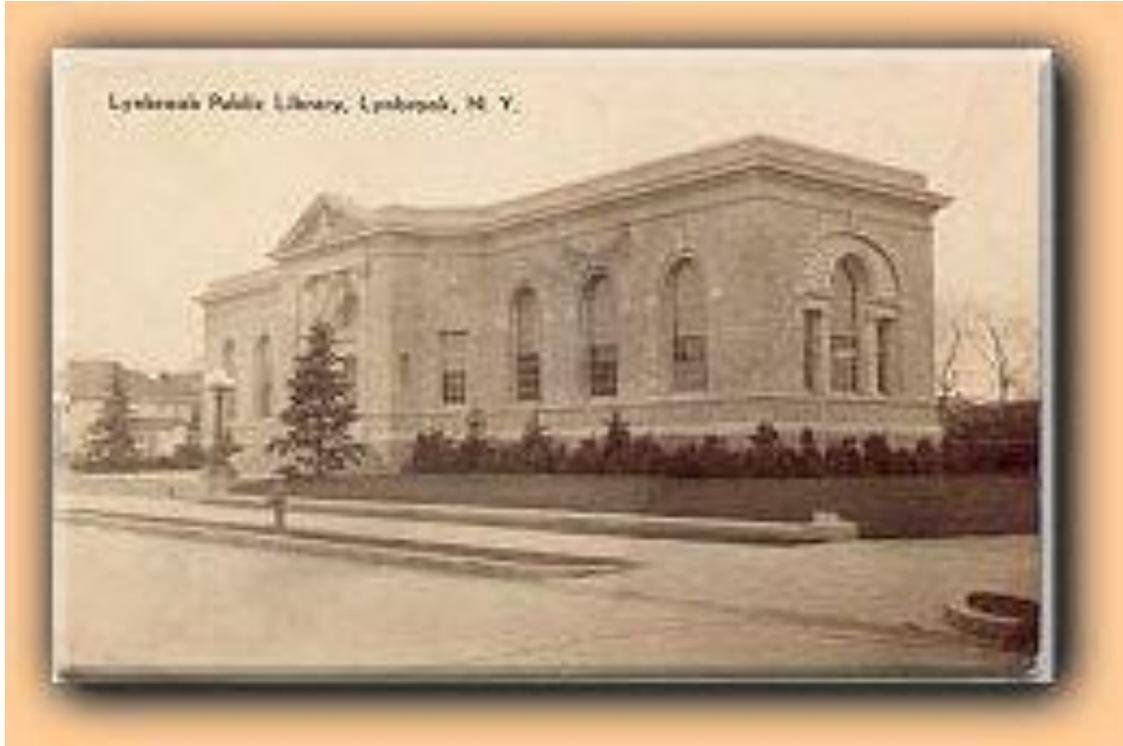
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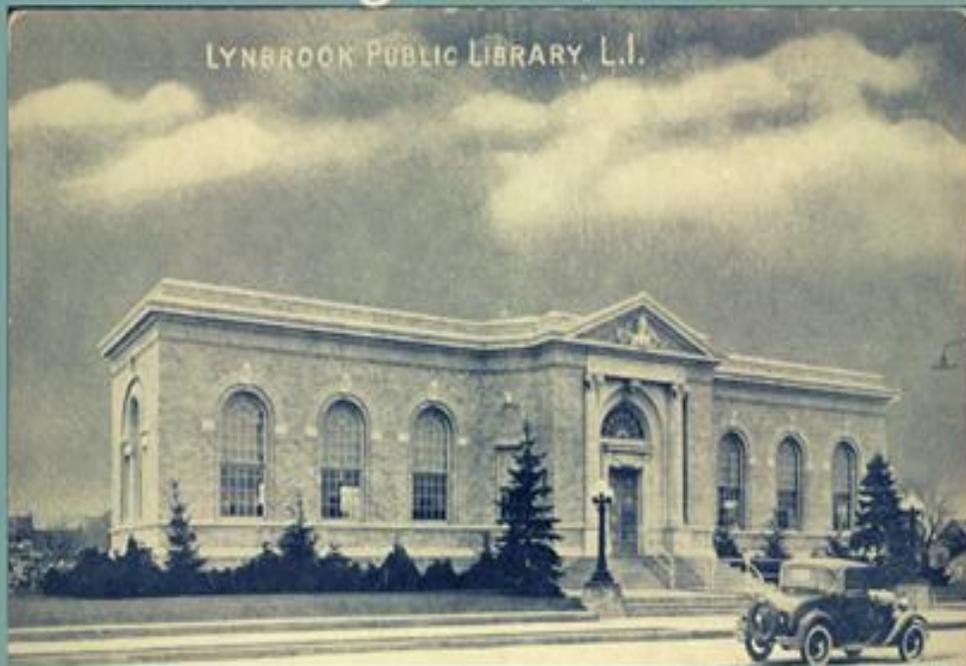
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Photo Gallery



Lynbrook Library Throwback Thursday

Lynbrook Public Library, Lynbrook, Long Island, N.Y.



Identifier: HIS461

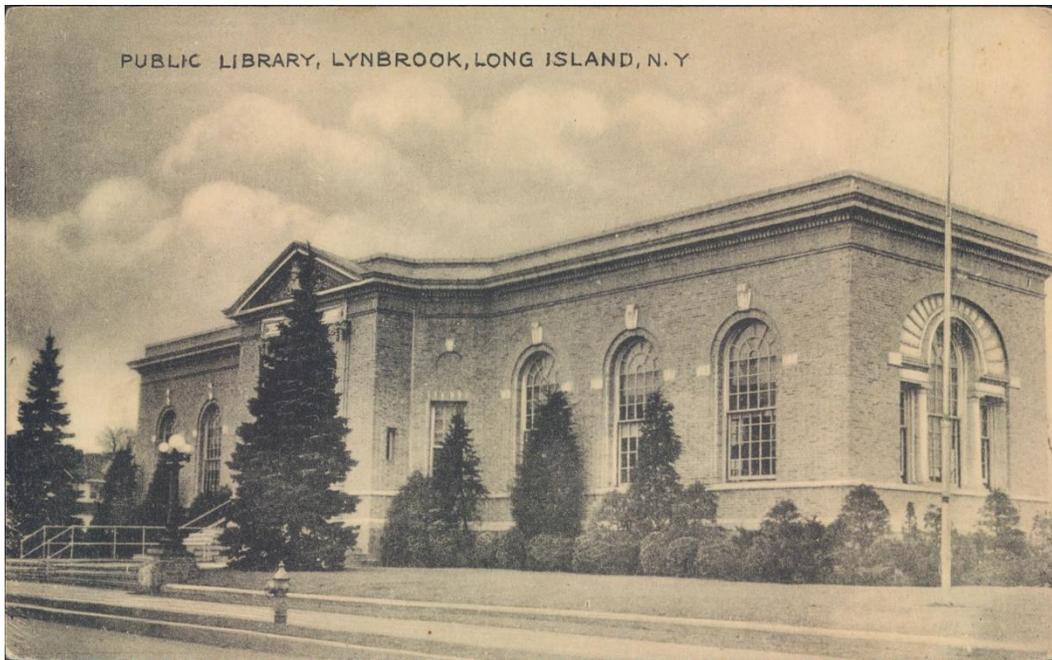
View of the Lynbrook Public Library, 1939. The Neoclassical building, designed by Hugh Tallant and built by Morgan Coblenz Construction Company on land donated by Tredwell Carpenter opened on October 19, 1929. Its Neoclassical architecture includes classical design elements and symbolism in the tradition of grand public buildings of the era, especially in keeping with the tradition of the Carnegie Libraries. The pediment contains an image of the goddess of knowledge and war, Athena. The lampposts on either side of the entry steps symbolize the ascent to enlightenment.

Color postcard published by the Manhattan Card Publishing Company, New York, NY. Historic Postcards of Lynbrook, NY. The Historical Society of East Rockaway and Lynbrook, The New York Heritage Digital Collections.

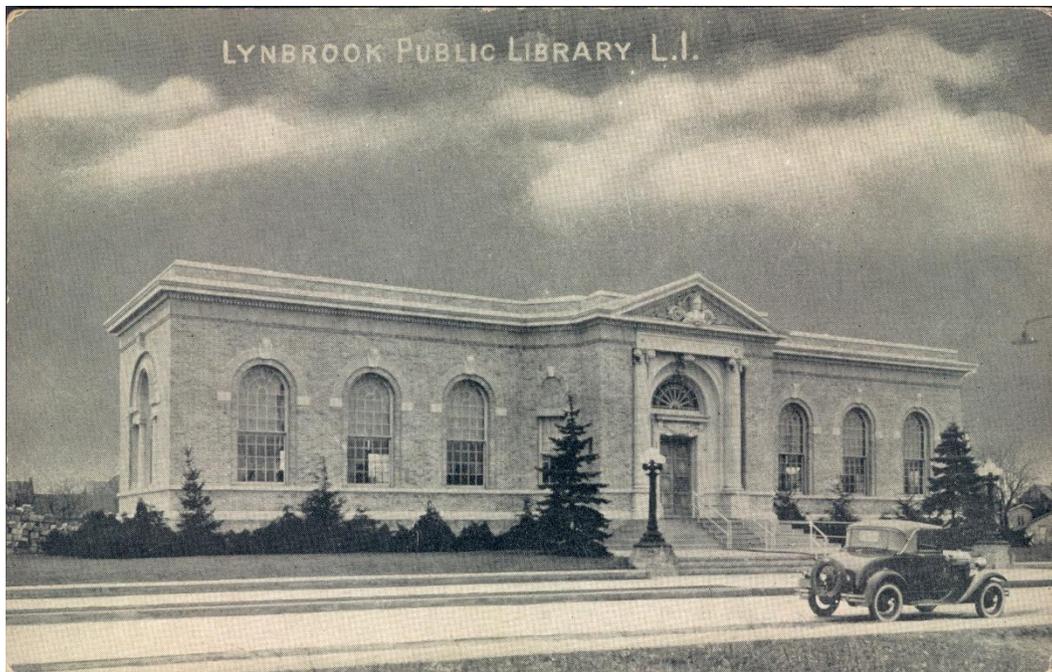


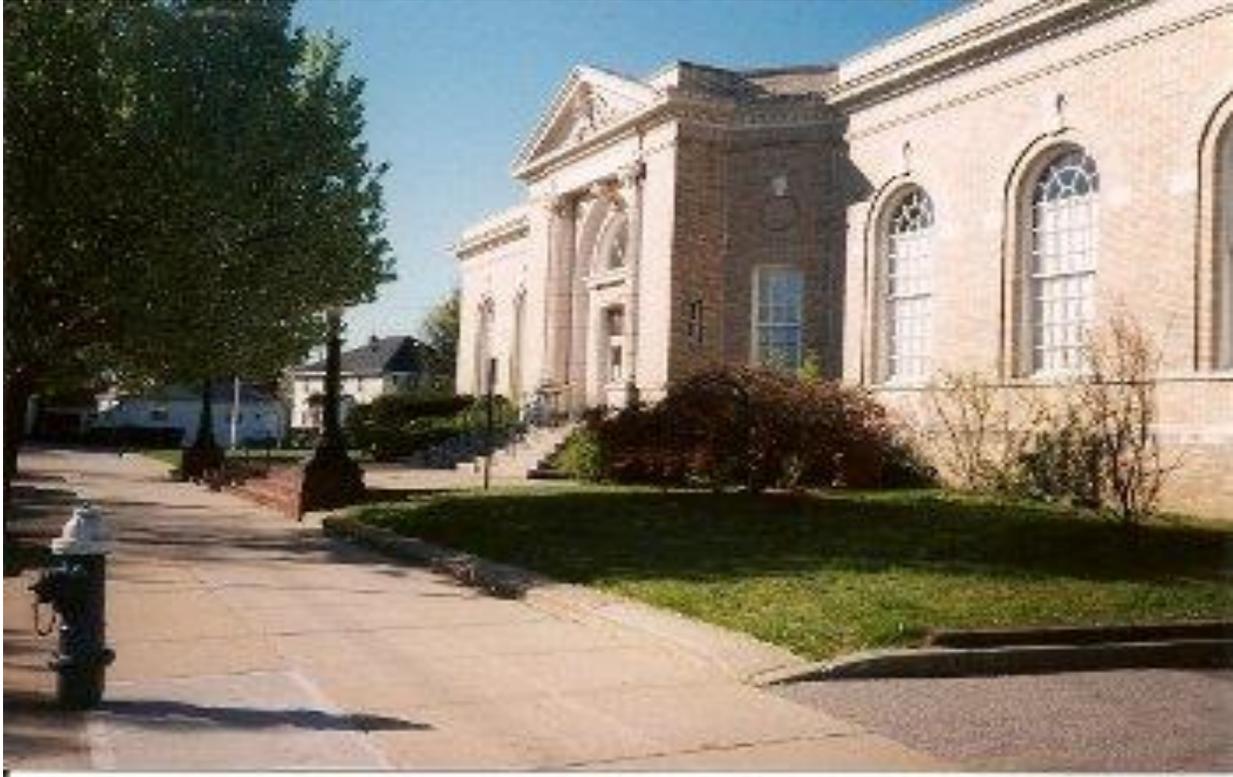
LYNBROOK PUBLIC LIBRARY
Making Connections

PUBLIC LIBRARY, LYNBROOK, LONG ISLAND, N. Y



LYNBROOK PUBLIC LIBRARY L.I.







Before and after 1992 rear addition



Lynbrook suffragettes marching in Parade – 1914



Lynbrook Suffragette Irene Davison (on the right) in a Suffragette Wagon. You can just see the word "VOTES" on the triangular banner at the upper left. Drawn on a horse named "Suffrage".

Supplement
Preliminary Information Form
Lynbrook Library After 1929

Immediately following the 1929 grand opening of the stately Lynbrook Library, 39 local clubs were aiming to hold their meetings there, according to the *New Era* newspaper. Except for a few large organizations who had their own buildings, these groups previously borrowed space in churches, synagogues, and schools. The new Library space was gladly welcomed by these local groups including the Friday Club and Dorcas Club founders who continued to meet, at the new location.

With its larger capacity, the Library became a central hub in the community hosting many civic activities, social events, education programs, and served as a base for many local organizations regularly from 1929 to date as more fully described herein.

This 1929 structure continues to present a variety of events that are in harmony with, and enhanced by the very space itself. Many community events, exhibits, performances, and concerts are held there. It serves as an excellent space for music and theater performances due to its superb acoustics for which the architect, Hugh Tallant (1869-1952), was noted, having designed several Broadway theaters including the New Amsterdam, the Lyceum, the Liberty Theater, the Gaiety and the Brooklyn Academy of Music, several which have achieved landmark status. He also wrote extensively on the subject. (<http://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/lp/1026.pdf>)

As a testament to the community's overwhelming appreciation of the Lynbrook Library, for example, in 1961 the Library was gifted with "several thousand" tulip bulbs for its grounds by the Rotary Club. While in that same year, the front page of the Village Newsletter touted the Library's first "Community Coin Operated Copy Machine" made available for use by the public, a rarity for that time.

Undeniably, the Library's extensive partnership with the community from 1929-2022 has flourished. Activities, for example, included:

- Election Day Polling Place for November national and local elections
- Home of Soldiers Monument and annual Memorial Day services 1935-1949
- Host of the Village's 25th (1936) & 100th (2011) Anniversary of Incorporation ceremony
- Community Book Sales
- Weekly Community forum's & Lectures, 1950-1960's

"Great Books" discussion group 1950-1960, Friday evenings
Free children's and adult programs
"16mm sound" films- 1950's
Meetings & Conferences
Movies, Shows, Concerts and Theatrical Performances since 1952
Historical & Archive exhibitions
Blood drives
Library Open House 1954- 25th Anniversary
Art exhibitions; Currier & Ives in 1954
Annual Great Give Back
Bereavement group meetings
Cub Scouts
Driver safety classes
Book Club meetings
Weekly Chi Gong classes
Biweekly discussion groups
Lynbrook Village meetings- 1969
Cooking, Painting and Craft classes
Events for local politicians
Annual participation in the Great Book Giveaway
Lynbrook school district meetings and classes
Community pulmonary tests-1970's
Computer training for staff & patrons
Test preparation classes
Staff meetings
Mayor New Resident Night
Exercise programs
Health, wellness, mind and body programs
Holiday events
Community film programs on Sundays-1980's
Friends of the Library Tea- 1980's
Environmental, nature and educational programs
Family astronomy program and telescope demonstrations
Property tax workshop
Special exhibits (9/11, President's Day, Martin Luther Day, Author pics)
Income Tax preparation

In 1952 the dirt basement area of the 1929 building was finished into an auditorium/reading room to accommodate the growing number using Library event rooms. In 1962 the Cerebral Palsy Assoc. donated a Diary to allow groups to organize their reservations. These groups included:

KIWANIS

Lynbrook Chamber of Commerce
Historical Society of East Rockaway and Lynbrook
SEAL (Society for the Encouragement of Arts in Lynbrook)
Boy Scouts & Girl Scouts
The Village Art Club
Mahjong group
Friends of the Library
4-H Club
Knitting group
Civic organizations
Lynbrook Highway Dept.
Nassau County & Town of Hempstead

The upstairs main room of the 1929 building has an occupancy of 123 to accommodate large meetings and social events. The room sometimes is divided to allow use by several groups. Large events such as movies and shows are held in the main event room while smaller groups such as story times are held in the smaller section.

An annual interactive week-long education program and exhibition for fourth-grade students by members of the Historical Society of Lynbrook and East Rockaway fills the entire space with historical memorabilia including an operating model of a gristmill and farm implements and a model of a historic grave marker from 1837.

The Board Room, on the third floor is used as a meeting room for smaller groups and holds a large portion of the archives and artifacts of the Historical Society of East Rockaway. Their archives and decades of the Lynbrook Herald will be scanned this year making them available online through The New York Heritage Digital Collections thanks to a LILRC grant. (<https://nyheritage.org/organizations/historical-society-east-rockaway-and-lynbrook>).

On the World Wide Web, a weekly Throwback Thursday series features archives of the Historical Society and Lynbrook Library. The library also holds a collection of books and items of historical significance to the East Rockaway, Lynbrook, and Long Island communities in its Long Island Collection.

In 1959, the Lynbrook Library joined the Nassau Library System to continue to serve the community through interloan participation. The Library Board also increased its members from 5, to 7 in 1978 to help assist with the growing challenges to provide services, and in 1984 the community formed the Friends of the Library which obtained not for profit status, enabling it to raise funds to support the 1929 Library.

The library has not been without controversy. In 1935 one of the more active community-library happenings erupted when a large WWI Soldiers Monument was relocated there by the Village Board at the request of the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Spanish War veterans. The Library's Board of Trustees felt it was not consistent with the Library's architecture, which caused quite a stir. In 1949 the Village Board eventually acquiesced and relocated the statue.

In 1957 as the Library's role in the community continued to grow after regional World War II development, the Library Board commissioned a set of plans for a new three story addition- the subject of replacement/expansion was debated and tabled throughout the 60's and 70's until the public voted in 1985 to "Save the Library" and defeat a proposition for new building. The following year the Village Board approved a Library Advisory Committee recommendation to preserve and expand the Library.

After careful planning, a new wing was constructed in 1992 to provide accessory space for the library collection and offices, while strategically maintaining the original architecture of the interior and exterior of the 1929 building. Specifically, the addition was placed precisely where it is to preserve the street presence of the 1929 building by keeping the addition in the background. When the addition was complete, books were moved to the new building, allowing the interior architecture of the original 1929 building to be fully appreciated (see attached photos).

This new structure enhanced Library services to the public by, for example, allowing Sunday hours beginning in 2020 and expanding its collection by about 5,000 annually of print, audio, visual, and digital resources.

As you can see, the 1929 Lynbrook Library building has exceeded the dreams of its suffragette Founders by also becoming a cultural hub in the community, hosting many civic activities, social events, and education programs consistently from 1929 to 2022, while upholding its grand and historic charm.

Incorporated Village of Lynbrook



1 Columbus Drive, Lynbrook, NY 11563
516-599-8300 – Lynbrookvillage.net

Mayor

Alan C. Beach

Trustees

Michael Hawxhurst - Deputy Mayor

Robert Boccio

AnnMarie Reardon

Laura Ryder

Lynbrook Library Board of Trustees

Carol Donaldson – President

Brian V. Smithwick – Vice President

Frederick Yosca – Treasurer

Co-Secretary

Maura O'Connor Bermiss

Rosemarie Curran

Trustees

Kathleen Kobbe

Gary Speredowich

Robyn Gilloon - Library Director

Preliminary Information Form prepared by:

Kathleen Curran, Librarian

Robyn Gilloon, Library Director

John Giordano, Village Administrator

Art Mattson, Village Historian

December 7, 2021

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