

Then & Now – The Library

**Written by Anita Woodward at the 100th Anniversary Celebration
of the Princeton Library on October 16, 1983**

Once upon a time the center of town was quite different - rather empty one might say - except for the swine running at large!

In 1819 Ward Nicholas Boylston, who had inherited Moses Gill's vast holdings of 2,000 acres, gave the Reverend Samuel Clark a small amount of land on our common - "provided he build a good substantial house, barn and woodshed upon it, inside of 2 years."



Samuel Clark/Ollila House c. 1840 at 10 Mountain Rd.



Princeton Common Croquet Between 1838 & 1865

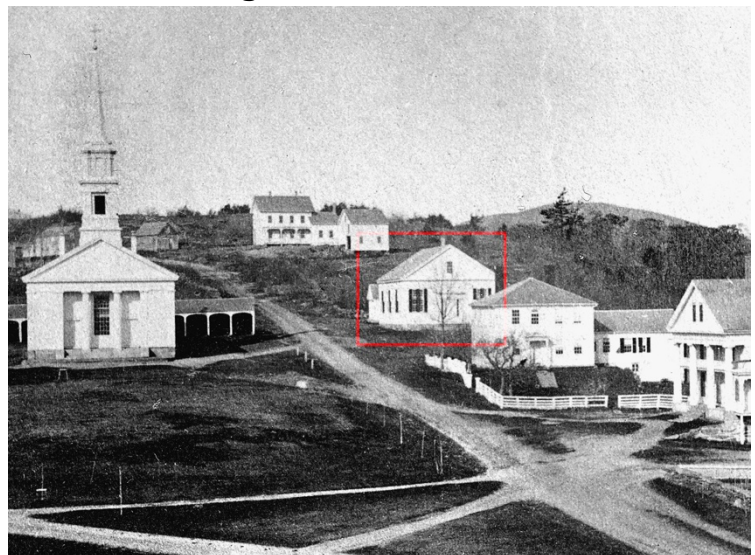
By May of 1838 that substantial house and outbuildings were moved across Mountain Road and became the Gregory house - now the Ollila's. And in its place the new 3rd Meeting House and horse sheds were built - so in 1840 we looked like this.

Mr. Boylston had also given money for a Town House, which was built where the church now stands - and that is the way things looked for some 40 years, when Boylston Hall burned in

September 1883. This fire set in motion a series of events; grand selling, swapping of land, buildings being moved and construction which drastically change the looks of this part of Princeton.

Then Mr. Edward Augustus Goodnow, a native son who had left town and made a name and a fortune for himself, gave the town a gift. E. A. Goodnow was the grandson of Edward Goodnow who had marched the 19th of April 1775 and came to Princeton after the Revolution.

E. A. Goodnow was a very generous man and had already made many substantial gifts to fine organizations - now he offered to give the town a building that would be a library and two classrooms - until such time when the library would need more space. So, the Goodnow Memorial Building



Princeton Common Boylston Hall in Red < 1865

had been started in 1882, to be used for such purpose - "with separate hallways and stairs for boys and girls" and "fitted with the most approved seats and desks."

Mr. Goodnow now proposed to the town that the church and horse sheds should be moved to the site of the former Town Hall, and that the Town buy the lot west of the new building underway, and he would give \$3,000 if the Town raised \$9,000 to build a new Town Hall. He also stipulated that the building be named Bagg Hall after two of his wives.



The building, designed by Stephen C. Earle of Worcester, was to be in memory of two of his wives - he had four - and a son who had died in infancy. It was built of rose tinted Milford granite and brown stone from Longmeadow. In the tower is a Howard Clock with a bell inscribed "Goodnow Memorial Building - Knowledge is power." The cost of land and building was \$30,000.

The deed of gift, dated February 11, 1884, included fixtures, furniture, bell and clock and stated that the town shall be at all times and forever hereafter provide, at its cost and expense, for keeping the Building, Clock and Bell in thorough repair and the same constantly insured. . . should the same be burned or otherwise destroyed in whole or in part . . . said Town shall rebuild, repair and restore the building' without unnecessary delay.

The agreement between the Town and Church was signed the 19th of April 1884 - and among certain stipulations listed is one that showed someone was thinking of our future. The "land heretofore used for the church shall always remain open for air, light and view and shall always be a public park or common and no other, building shall be erected upon it."

The cost of moving the church in 1885 was \$4,256.87 and Mrs. Houghton, who died not too many years ago, remembered riding on it. What an exciting time that most have been!

I'd like to give you an idea of what was going on in Princeton at this time.

- The present Mountain Road was being built.
- There were 226 houses in town, 1,022 cows, 273 horses and 91 swine.,
- Thomas Hastings Russell property consisted of two carriages, two houses - the gray and yellow houses - two barns and a hen house and about 100 acres. This was assessed at \$9,100 and he paid \$100.11 in taxes.

Now back to the Library: In the booklet containing the deed of Gift are a few rules and regulations.

- 1) No person other than the Librarian shall be allowed to take books from the shelf.
- 2) Male members shall not remain with heads covered in the Library or Reading room - the children's room. No smoking, loud talking or unseemly behavior shall be permitted.

There is also a list of the 2,019 books and pamphlets in that little book and here are a few titles;

- "Manures"
- "Muck Manual"
- "Mothers Recompense"
- "10 Years Among the Mail Bags"
- "40 Years Right with the Drink Demon"
- "50 Years of Temperance Cause" and
- "The Accomplished Gentlemen."

Sorry, they are not in the stacks now!

In the town reports there are some interesting Library facts.

- The Trustees met once a year - very briefly.

- Susan Davis was the first librarian - salary was \$70 annually, though she got a raise to \$100 in 1900.
- The Library was open approximately 66 days a year.
- Every year the circulation was reported - one year 92 books was the best day's circulation - one the lowest.
- Summer people rented the books.
- 1892 - The engraving of Washington and his family by Edward Savage

was presented to the Library by his grandson, Charles H. Savage of Chicago.

- 1908 - Metal bookcases put in room formerly used by the primary school. Cost \$225, \$85 for painting room. Water closets at rear of the building were removed and provision made for same in



Library Checkout Desk c.1880 - Circular Stairs originally went to the Clock Tower and Storage. Fred Pape's Eagle Scout Project converted this storage space into the Librarian's Office.

basement.

- 1914 - Harry S. Whitney (Al's father) elected a Trustee.
- 1919 - The Catholics in town rented upstairs room for \$21 annually.
- 1921 - A Committee was appointed to secure bids for electric lights in the Library. Lights were installed at a cost \$272.60.
- 1921 - The first story hour was held.
- 1927 - Blakes "History of Princeton" sold for \$5.
- 1929 - The Trustees voted to place memorial plaque to Susan Davis, Librarian, from 1889 to 1929

- After 1929 - Mr. Donaldson the Minister was in charge (1929-1942) when I was little – Since then the librarians have been:
 - Nason Arnold (1942-1954)
 - Norma Passage (1954-1968)
 - Anita Woodward (1968-1971)
 - Ellen Howe (1971-1989)
 - Anne Moore (1976 librarian pro tem for Ellen Howe 6months)
 - Nan Flanders (1989-1991)
 - Wendy Pape (1991-2012)
 - Mary Barroll (2013-2020)
 - Erin Redihan (2020-2022)
 - Mary Barroll (2022)
 - Paula Korstvedt (2023 -)
- 1953 - Trustees met twice a year and an oil burner was installed - \$520.
- 1953 - Trustees will request of the Selectmen to see about water and rest rooms added.
- 1956 - Norma S. Passage became our first really trained Librarian. The trustees met six times - committee appointed to look into water and toilet facilities.

Dot Mason, Nan Dingman and I wandered into the Library and stayed to help - in time to become paid part time workers at the magnificent sum of 60 cents an hour. Norma and Vic Passage spent hours discarding books, and we all spent hours trying to get caught up, buy new books and catalog what was already there and worth saving, reorganizing, shifting books, washing shelves - on and on it went with all of us giving a great deal of volunteer help. We hovered over people looking in card catalog - ready to say "Just because it's not listed doesn't mean we don't have it" - as sad to say, most books had not been cataloged. We all loved it, though sometimes I yearned to shut the doors and work in peace.

The bookmobile Dot Hitchcock started. The Junior Library Club came into being. There were art shows. The Library came to life and seemed to become the visiting center. The Regional Library started - now we could get nearly anything a patron requested.



But Norma did leave, and I remember wailing "you promised not to leave till all the books were cataloged!" I took over, and what a hard person she was to follow! It took time for it to become my library, but it did - though now I realize that I worried too much and took too much work home to do.

Norma had gotten the books into shape, and I'd like to think that I was responsible for having the building looked over by an expert and having a list of about 20 things to be done in order of importance - bless Sandy Harpell!

The last item on the list was wall to wall carpeting - and Ellen got that! So, 100 years later we have indeed grown and have a lot to celebrate - from 2,000 books to 12,000, from 68 days open to 156. Close to 1,900 people are registered users - that's more than half our population. There has been and is a delightful story hour - all kinds of shows and exhibits, faithful volunteers and on and on it continues to go. But then this is a special Town and a very special Library.

During the summer of 2022, this document was OCR scanned; images added from the PHS collection; and using parenthesis it was slightly updated to clarify locations of places mentioned by William "Bud" Brooks. The original typed versions can be found in a Gray File Box entitled "PHS Previous Research and Talks."