

Merrill Memorial Library

Main Street, Yarmouth



Significance

Built in 1904-5 and designed by Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow of Boston, the Colonial Revival Merrill Memorial Library holds a prominent cultural and physical position in the center of Yarmouth. The original tripartite plan of the historic library was modified by a three-story Post Modern addition in the 1980s. While the addition was well-considered, it altered the original circulation patterns in the historic library and the construction budget did not include a rehabilitation of the historic building. The departure of the Yarmouth Historical Society from the third floor was the catalyst for the Library trustees and the Town to develop a master plan and revitalization effort for the entire building to serve the modern needs of library patrons and incorporate sustainable strategies.

Project Scope

Using public and private funds the project converted the third floor of the library into an 80-seat meeting room, created a new entry, refurbished the interior oak woodwork, and restored the Reading Room's arch, creating a quiet study area. Challenges included providing code compliance for third floor assembly space and addressing contaminated soils from a former brickyard that had been located on the site of the new entry addition. Rehabilitation of the original 1905 wood windows and the 1980s aluminum windows as well as systems upgrades and insulation were undertaken to improve energy efficiency. Materials for the addition and interior restoration were carefully selected and locally sourced to be compatible with the existing materials. Code compliance was achieved with minor impact to the historic fabric of the building.

Recognition

Architect Nancy Barba worked with the Library staff to design a project that used environmentally friendly strategies to renew the library for the 21st century. In addition to preserving the historic character of the building and creating a safer and more welcoming environment for the community, the project has reduced the library's energy consumption by 30% using energy efficient systems and sustainable practices.