

“The Branch Library

at West Concord proves a success . . .”

-Concord Town Report, Report of the Library Committee, 1919

In 1918, the residents of West Concord, feeling that the distance between West Concord and Concord Center hampered their access to the Concord Free Public Library collections, petitioned for a branch library. In 1919, the West Concord Branch opened in one room of the West Concord Grammar School. In 1928, through the bequest of Loring N. Fowler, the Library Corporation began the process of erecting a separate building on a lot at the corner of Main and Church Streets, purchased from the Town of Concord.

The Loring N. Fowler Memorial Library, designed by architect and Concord resident Harry Little of Frohman, Robb & Little - a firm based in Boston and Washington - was dedicated on May 18, 1930, the Honorable Prescott Keyes presiding. Mr. Fowler’s “Yankee thrift” and generosity were praised, while the *Concord Journal* called the opening of the library “A real event in the history of West Concord”.

In 1996 David Holdorf designed a major renovation for the small building that had remained fundamentally unchanged for over sixty years. This renovation added a west wing that would eliminate the need for the basement stack area, allowing access to all materials on one level, stored on convenient compact shelving. The skylight feature substantially brightened much of the library and the architectural changes made the Fowler building ADA compliant.

In 2009 plans for another Fowler renovation were floated. This addition, designed by J. Stewart Roberts, the architect who had recently renovated the library’s 129 Main Street site, opened in May 2011. The Fowler gained an expanded main floor and added a new lower level that included an expansive meeting room, accessed by a new elevator and a graceful, light-filled circular staircase. The renovation also includes updated staff and Special Collections spaces. Much of the original interior Arts and Crafts style was preserved, allowing the modernized building to retain its 1930s design aesthetic.

The Generous Bequest of Loring N. Fowler

Loring Nixon Fowler (1855-1921) was born and raised in Stow, began work as a grocery store clerk in West Acton, but spent the preponderance of his life in West Concord. After learning the ropes at the store in South Acton, he opened his own establishment at Concord Junction which featured large stocks of a variety of merchandise, including groceries, furniture and lumber. The store burned down in 1900, but Mr. Fowler continued in the lumber business and branched out into real estate, building a large number of both residential and commercial structures in Concord.

Loring Fowler was a trustee of the West End Land Company and a trustee and member of the Board of Investment Committee of the Middlesex Institution for Savings. From 1888 until 1900 he was the Concord Junction Postmaster.

Known for his cheerful, even-tempered disposition and willingness to help others, Loring Fowler died suddenly on December 16th, 1921 after walking a significant distance to look at a wood lot. He had been suffering for some time from heart disease. Mr. Fowler left behind his wife, Mary (Cutler) Fowler and his daughter, Avis Vesta Fowler.

1921 Concord Town Report

Report of the Concord Free Public Library

The Trustees of the Concord Free Public Library have learned with much interest the provisions of the will of Mr. Loring N. Fowler, who died suddenly Friday afternoon, December 16, 1921.

Mr. Fowler was born in Stow, February 12, 1855, but his prosperous business life was passed in Concord Junction. Following out a purpose he had harbored for several years, he made his will August 15, 1921; and by it, after making proper and suitable provision for his widow, Mrs. Mary C. Fowler, and his daughter, Miss Avis V. Fowler, during their lives, he gave all his property to this corporation for the erection or endowment of a memorial library building or library at Concord Junction.

That an honored and prominent citizen should conceive and carry out a purpose and plan so generous and public spirited, is a cause of gratitude and satisfaction; and we here record our sincere appreciation of this great gift, the savings of a successful life.