



**West Falmouth Library Archives
Guide to the West Falmouth Library
collection, 1881-2016**

**Manuscript Collection MC-01
8 boxes, plus realia and oversize
materials (7.5 lin. ft.)**

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Historical Information

The West Falmouth Library would not have been possible without five young women who gathered in the mid-1870s to form the Young People's Union. In order to enrich their lives in the quiet farming village of West Falmouth, these service-minded women met weekly to enjoy literary and musical programs and to create a library. They donated books from their personal collections and supported their organization through membership and circulation fees. By 1879, they stored their 50-volume collection in a kitchen closet. A group of volunteers constructed the first library building in 1881 on what is now known as Old Dock Road.

When the Young People's Union dissolved and became the state-chartered West Falmouth Library Association in 1893, the collection had grown to 800 books. R. J. and Abby (Grant) Mendenhall of Minneapolis donated the land upon which the current library stands for the purpose of "elevating and improving the cultural tone of the community." Quaker Daniel Wheeler Swift and his brother funded the present library's construction, which began in 1895. Upon dedicating the new library on July 15, 1896, more than 1,000 books filled the shelves.

The West Falmouth Library quickly became the village's center of activity; it hosted lectures and a literary club. An endowment was established in 1959. In 1972, fundraising was undertaken to build an addition to accommodate the growing collection and provide room for activities in the lower level, while in 1998, adjacent land was acquired, which was turned into Jane's Memorial Garden.

The Library became a member of the Cape Libraries Automated Materials Sharing (CLAMS) library network and started lending materials to the public in April 2008. From fall 2016 through spring 2017, an addition was constructed and the original historic building was restored. The Library remains an

independent, nonprofit organization, primarily funded by donors and annual fundraising events.

Scope and Content Note

The West Falmouth Library collection, dating from 1881 to 2016, contains materials regarding the founding, construction, dedication, and activities of the West Falmouth Library. There is documentation concerning both the first library building constructed in 1881 and the current library building constructed in 1896 as well as building additions and renovations, notably from 1972 and 2016. Materials include documents, photographs, correspondence, notes, newspaper clippings, scrapbooks, circulation books, record books, realia, annual reports, and architectural plans. Subjects include histories of the Library, anniversaries of the Library's founding and building dedication, Library by-laws, activities held at the Library, and Library inventories and gifts.

Administrative Information

Custodial History

The custodial history of the collection is undocumented.

Acquisitions Information

Materials were collected by board members and later donated to the Library at various times (acc. 2016-01). It is not documented how or when the materials arrived at the Library.

Processing Information

Processed by Katy Sternberger from January to September 2016. Materials were organized first by format and then by chronology within individual boxes and folders, except for the second series, which was arranged by subject.

The papers were placed in new, acid-free folders. Delicate documents and photographs were placed in Mylar sleeves. Newspaper clippings were photocopied onto acid-free paper. Fragile, leather-bound books were placed spine down in document cases lined with buffered tissue. Duplicate materials were removed from the collection.

Preferred Citation

West Falmouth Library collection, 1850-2016. MC-01, "Folder Name." West Falmouth Library Archives.

Access Restrictions

Open: materials are available for research.

Use

Copyright: Permission to publish material from the collection must be authorized by the Library Director.

Related Material

See MC-10, the West Falmouth oral history collection, for recollections of the Library by prominent members of the community, including Bertha Boyce who served at the Library for a number of years.

Arrangement

Arranged in five series, based on format.

List of Series:

[Photographs](#)

[Subject Files](#)

[Books and Scrapbooks](#)

[Realia](#)

[Oversize](#)

Index Terms

Gifford, Virtue Bowerman, 1875-1963
Mendenhall, Abby Swift
Swift, D. Wheeler (Daniel Wheeler), 1840-1906
Union Library Association
West Falmouth (Mass.) -- History
West Falmouth Library
West Falmouth Library Association
Young People's Union

Collection Inventory

Photographs, c. 1896-2004, 1 folder plus oversize materials (3 lin. ft.)

Scope and Content Note

Series contains photographs and postcards of the West Falmouth Library, including photos of the first library building established in 1881 as well as exterior and interior photos of the current library building, constructed in 1896.

Arrangement

Photographs arranged chronologically.

Box	Folder		
1	1	Photographs of West Falmouth Library	c. 1896-2004
Drawer			
FF01		Photograph of first library building, 1881-1896 (in transit)	c. 1896
FF01		Photograph of West Falmouth Library by Holman	c. 1900
FF01		Photograph of West Falmouth Library by James Posgay	1973

FF01	Photograph of West Falmouth Library (south elevation) by James Posgay	1973
FF01	Photograph of West Falmouth Library, new wing (southeast corner) by James Posgay	1973

Subject Files, 1881-2016, 3 boxes (0.75 lin. ft.)

Scope and Content Note

Series contains documents, correspondence, notes, newspaper clippings, and ephemera pertaining to the founding and history of the West Falmouth Library, including documentation about the construction of the 1896 library building. The series also contains certificates, programs, and notes regarding group activities held at the Library, in addition to inventories of objects collected by the Library, library cards, and “The Phoenix,” the literary journal of the Young People’s Union, which founded the library.

Series also contains newspaper clippings, which have been photocopied onto acid-free paper, annual reports, documentation about the Library’s 2015-2016 capital campaign to restore and renovate the building, and a list of the librarians or library directors and the presidents of the Board of Directors.

Arrangement

Folders are arranged topically.

Box	Folder		
1	2	Construction of library	1893-1895
1	3	Incorporation of the library	1893
1	4	Library dedication	1896
1	5	Library anniversary	1900
1	6	Library anniversary	1939
1	7	Library anniversary	1954
1	8	Library anniversary	1993
1	9	Library by-laws	undated
1	10	Library by-laws, drafts	c. 1961
1	11	Library by-laws	1973
1	12	Correspondence regarding the library	1940-1951
1	13	Correspondence regarding funds for the library	1969-1976
1	14	Building fund	1972
1	15	Library in the National Register of Historic Places	c. 1998
1	16	Library certificates	1893-2005
1	17	History of the library	1894-1940
1	18	Library inventories and gifts	1898-1974, undated
1	19	Student research paper, “History of the West Falmouth Library, Especially Concerning Cataloguing”	1973
1	20	“The Phoenix,” literary journal of the Young People’s Union	1881-1882
1	21	Library cards	1943-1948
1	22	Library programs	1897-1952

1	23	Friends of the Bookshelf	c. 1962
1	24	Needlework Guild	c. 1975-1976
5	1	News articles	1951-1971, undated
5	2	News articles	1995-2006
5	3	News articles	2007
5	4	News articles	2008-2009
5	5	News articles	2012-2014
5	6	News articles	2015
5	7	Capital campaign	2015-2016
DM01		Informational video on the capital campaign	2014
5	8	Annual reports	2005-2011
5	9	Annual reports	2012-2016
5	10	West Falmouth Library librarians/directors and presidents (1896-2016)	2016

Books and Scrapbooks, 1884-1991, 4 boxes (3 lin. ft.)

Scope and Content Note

Series contains a calligraphed book with names of donors to memorial funds, a guest book, two scrapbooks about the history of the Library, circulation books, and early library record books.

Arrangement

Arranged by format and then chronologically.

Box	Folder		
2		Calligraphed book, "In Memoriam, West Falmouth Library"	1973-1977
2		West Falmouth Library guest book	1972-1984
2		Scrapbook, history of the West Falmouth Library, 1896-1971	undated
2		Scrapbook, history of the West Falmouth Library, 1971-1977	undated
2	1	Loose newspaper clippings and photographs from 1971-1977 scrapbook	c. 1989-1991
2	2	Dr. Grant's list of donors to build the library, July 15, 1896	undated
3		West Falmouth Library circulation book	c. 1896-1899
3		West Falmouth Library circulation book	1900-1903
3		West Falmouth Library circulation book	1903-1931
3		West Falmouth Library circulation book	1930-1957
4		Records of the Union Library Association	1884
4		Record book	undated
4		Records of the Union Library Association	1891-1895
4		Record book, West Falmouth Library Association	1893
4		Records of the Saturday Evening Literary Club	1896-1897
7		ALA Standard Accession book	c. 1896-1960

Realia, c. 1900-1993, 3 boxes (0.75 lin. ft.)

Scope and Content Note

Series contains realia related to the West Falmouth Library. Objects include an early-twentieth-century plate manufactured by Wileman and Co. for Arthur Underwood, an early Library board member, which depicts the “West Falmouth Free Public Library;” two glass cup plates created by Pairpont Cup Plates of Sagamore, Massachusetts, to celebrate the 1993 centennial of the Library’s founding; two gavels, suspected to date from the early years of the Library; and two cast-iron embosser designed for the West Falmouth Library by Robbins and Co. of Boston.

Arrangement

Arranged by format.

Box	Folder		
FR01		West Falmouth Free Public Library plate	c. 1890-1900
FR01		Library centennial cup plate	1993
FR01		Library centennial cup plate	1993
FR01	1	Documentation on West Falmouth Library cup plates	1993
4		Gavel	undated
4		Gavel	undated
6		Cast-iron embosser	undated
6		Cast-iron embosser	undated

Oversize, 1893-2001, 1 flat file drawer (3 lin. ft.)

Scope and Content Note

Series contains oversize materials, including documents and a newspaper regarding the incorporation, construction, and dedication of the West Falmouth Library as well as architectural plans concerning additions and renovations to the building.

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

Drawer	Folder		
FF01		“West Falmouth Library” donors for the “labor and expense of erecting its library building”	August 1, 1893
FF01		Incorporation of the library	August 3, 1893
FF01		Falmouth Enterprise, “Dedication of the Library”	July 18, 1896
FF01		Photograph of bicentennial rug	1976
FF01		Architectural plans, 1972 addition	November 1971
FF01		Architectural plans, 1972 addition - copy	November 1971
FF01		Architectural plans, 1972 addition	November 1971
FF01		Architectural plans, library lighting	1988
FF01		Architectural plans, elevator shaft	2001