

United States Department of the Interior
 National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Fletcher Memorial Library

Other names/site number: n/a

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 88 Main Street

City or town: Ludlow State: VT County: Windsor

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B ___C ___D

_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:	_____ Date
_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: _____ **Date** _____

Title : _____ **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government** _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ___ entered in the National Register
- ___ determined eligible for the National Register
- ___ determined not eligible for the National Register
- ___ removed from the National Register
- ___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

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Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register None (0)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: Library

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: Library

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19th AND 20th CENTURY REVIVALS: Renaissance Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: STONE (granite), CONCRETE;
Walls: BRICK, STONE (limestone quoining and ornamentation); Roof: STONE (slate),
METAL (copper); Other: BRICK (chimney).

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Fletcher Memorial Library is a red brick Renaissance Revival library situated in the center of the Village of Ludlow, Windsor County, Vermont. The 1901 building is compact in form, with a single-story construction that is demarcated by rhythmic fenestration and cohesive stone ornamentation—characterized by strong quoining, a corbelled roofline, stylized arched windows crowned by limestone festoons, and an anchoring pedimented entrance featuring a harmonious array of stylized limestone detailing crowned by a Fletcher family coat of arms. While the 1901 Latin Cross plan of the library remains the anchoring focal point for the building, a compatible 1964 addition developed to hold a children’s wing extends from the southwest corner of the building, characterized by a subservient brick form featuring rhythmic and understated arched windows and a spare material form. The interior of the Fletcher Memorial Library is highly reflective of its functional role as a library, with a central receiving room opening to flanking reading rooms and library stacks. The interior features a heightened and expressive Renaissance Revival design, with arched coffered ceilings, intricate marble paneling and floor and ceiling mosaics, rich woodwork, and an array of plaster and stonework presenting evocative design forms. Accentuating this architectural design, original library furnishings including reading desks, chairs, stacks, and other interior features are wholly reflective of the 1901 construction period, presenting a unified space that retains exceptionally high physical, operational, and associational integrity. Extending from this central aesthetic and programmatic core, several key support spaces characterize the property, including the 1964 children’s wing, restrooms, a lift, and a number of basement spaces devoted to storage, operations, and community functions—which as a whole are expressive of a range of development periods. As an assemblage, the Fletcher Memorial Library is a strong physical embodiment of both the significant 1901 development period and the ongoing physical evolution of the library as a vital and evolving

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community space. The library retains exceedingly strong integrity, with the original design, materials, and programmatic organization readily evident and experienced from both the exterior of the property within its village setting and the interior of the library's public spaces.

Narrative Description

Exterior Description

The Fletcher Memorial Library is located on a .67-acre lot fronting Ludlow's Main Street (Vermont Route 103). The building is set close to the street frontage and faces a small park, Veteran's Memorial Park, with a surrounding mixture of residential and institutional construction, with the soaring Queen Anne Ludlow Baptist Church rising to the west of the building site. As Main Street continues west past the library building it crosses the Black River, extending through the commercial heart of Ludlow Village, which is characterized by a mixture of nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial block construction. To the northwest, the ribboned slopes of Okemo Mountain (Ludlow Mountain) rise, developed as a ski area in the mid-twentieth century.

Fletcher Memorial Library's small lot is largely flat and is triangular in form, with a wide street frontage tapering to a narrower parking lot and open grass space behind the library building. A sidewalk and grass lawn lines the street frontage, with minimal decorative landscaping. A central concrete walkway accesses the core of the library building, with a secondary walkway accessing the 1964 children's wing to the west.

As originally designed in 1901, the Fletcher Memorial Library was of a Latin Cross plan, with a central stylized entry leading to a receiving room, circulation desk, and stacks, flanked by two generously-sized reading rooms (see **Figure 1** in Additional Documentation). The 1964 children's wing augmented this plan, with a recessed westerly extension affixed to the building's central core (see **Figure 23** in Additional Documentation). Despite this alteration, the original cross-shaped plan and form of the building is still readily discernible and remains a defining stylistic focal point. The following exterior description describes the two discrete sections of the building independently for clarity, although the building is a single cohesive operating assemblage.

Original 1901 Fletcher Memorial Library Building

As designed, the brick Fletcher Memorial Library orients to Ludlow's Main Street, with a Latin Cross-shaped form anchored by a defining and stylistically prominent pedimented entrance fronting the street. The building's foundation walls are composed of Medford (Massachusetts) granite punctuated by foundation level windows featuring splayed stone lintels. Bedford (Indiana) limestone quoining and ornamentation provide a heightened aesthetic to the simple brick form, with staggered quoining on all corners of the building, arched window frames featuring heavy lintels supported by scrolled brackets, and rich festoons, developed to symbolize "plenty," crowning each window. The hipped roof of the building's main body is supported by a limestone cornice with scrolled corbels and is sheathed in slate, with copper ridges defining the

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roof's form. The centered entrance is a stylistic focal point and is of a projecting gable roof design featuring a heightened and stylized pedimented form.

The street-fronting north side of the building is the stylistic focal point of the library, with the centered main entrance flanked by six large arched windows that line the reading rooms within. The entrance is accessed by three-sided granite steps surmounted by flanking iron railings and conveys a classical temple-like form, with projecting brick walls lined with staggered quoining, a limestone corbelled pediment design, and an ornate doorway framed by a "Gibbs surround," featuring staggered quoining, doric pilasters, framing acanthus leaves, and a broken pediment lintel framing the Fletcher family coat of arms. Above this elaborate entry, a carved limestone inscription framed by festoons reads "Fletcher Memorial Library Erected AD MDCCCXCIX." The paired entrance doors are of dark walnut, with a pair of wood-frame screen doors overlaying the paneled wood doors. A transom window featuring wrought iron spoked fleur de lis detailing crowns the door. The framing arched windows, three on each side of the entrance, are generously scaled, taking up much of the single-story brick face of the building. Each window is of an 18-over-12 wood-frame configuration overlain by storm windows. Smooth and simple limestone sills run below, with generously-scaled limestone scrolled brackets carrying the stone lintel above. Heavy festoons featuring fruit and acanthus imagery drape above, conveying the "plenty" found within the library's walls.

The east and west faces of the original cross-shaped library building reflect the architectural themes of the north-facing façade, with the west side lined with two arched windows of the same ornamentation and design as the façade, and the east two of the same. The south facing, secondary, elevations of the building reflect a more simplified aesthetic order, with smaller multilight arched windows embedded in simple limestone surrounds featuring a smooth sill and single limestone keystone at the apex of the window arch. The simpler design treatment along this central core of the building reflects the secondary nature of the sightlines, with this portion of the building oriented to the rear of the lot away from the primary street frontage. This secondary elevation also reflects a more altered form, with the westerly children's wing addition running from the southwest of the original building (1964 addition detailed below) and a 2004 accessible entrance extending from the rear of the building to the paved parking lot. The new accessible entrance at the rear of the building is of a gable-roof brick construction, with a concrete ramp and stoop supported by sturdy brick piers and a medium-pitch slate roof. Six-over-six wood windows line this entrance structure, with a half-light wood panel door surrounded by sidelights. While this brick entrance addition is not a historic period character defining feature of the building, it is compatible in form and subservient to the historic design framework of the building as a whole, and was placed to ensure operational continuity for library patrons.

1964 Children's Wing Addition

The 1964 children's wing was developed to accommodate distinct program space for children and families. The addition was developed to be subservient to the clearly defined architectural composition established in the 1901 construction and is clearly differentiated from this construction while presenting a compatible spatial and material form. The addition is of a simple brick form underlain by a concrete foundation and is connected to the main body of the building

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at its southwest corner by a flat-roofed, low-slung connecting ell with brick walls and an offset pair of nine-light, half-light wood panel doors accessed by a concrete stoop with iron railing. The main body of the addition has a hipped roof and a square brick form, with a simple fenestration pattern of arched windows that are reflective of those on the original building, albeit in a much more minimalistic form. The windows are of an arched 18-over-12 wood-frame configuration with overlaying storms, like those of the original building; however, the window surrounds consist of simple header brick sills and arches and are free of the elaborate limestone ornamentation found on the original building. The rear, south, wall of the addition fronting the parking lot is devoid of fenestration, with a blank brick wall. The modest addition is entirely subservient to the original construction, providing additional program space while maintaining the central character defining elements of the original 1901 Fletcher Memorial Library design.

Interior Description

Interior: Original 1901 Fletcher Memorial Library Building

In his 1901 dedication speech for the Fletcher Memorial Library, Allen M. Fletcher presented a symbolic rationale for the design of the library building:

In so far as a building may be made to express the life and character of a man, I have tried to make this one an expression of my father's life. The solid granite foundation suggests the strength and steadfastness of his character. The simplicity and squareness of the exterior correspond with the modesty and uprightness of his life. The beauty and richness of the interior are typical of the justness and fineness of his mind. The influences for good and the culture that lie hidden in the books are as symbols of the gentleness and beneficence of his heart.¹

Fletcher's allusion to the "beauty and richness of the interior," is well illustrated by the stylistic composition of features that characterize the interior of the Fletcher Memorial Library, with intricate marble stonework and mosaic patterning, lofty arched ceilings, heavy oak paneling, and carved Caen Limestone mantels presenting a heightened and cohesive design aesthetic framing the library's programmatic spaces.

The cross-shaped plan of the library presents an orderly interior form, with the entry vestibule leading to an open "delivery room" fronting the library circulation counter. Reading rooms flank the delivery room, and the book room stacks are located directly behind the circulation counter, along the long-line of the cross, accessed through entry doors leading from each reading room. As designed in 1901, a small librarian's room extends from the west side of the stacks. For a historic period plan of this configuration refer to **Figure 1** in Additional Documentation. Each major space of this original configuration is detailed in the following sections.

The vestibule is generally square in plan, softened by rounded semi-circular walls on the east and west sides that convey an intimate chapel-like tone as one enters the library building. The floor is of a white, green, and red marble mosaic design. The rounded walls are clad in marble panels framed by Ionic pilasters at the corners and marble crown molding. In the center portion of the

¹ *The Book of the Fletcher Memorial Library at Ludlow, Vermont 1902*, printed by *The Vermont Tribune*, 1902.

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vestibule, the vaulted ceiling features a diamond-pattern tile mosaic design, anchored by a suspended wrought iron light fixture. The two semi-circular wings of the vestibule feature curved marble panel walls with flat mosaic tile ceilings in a more subdued design of white tile framed by borders of red and green. A curved stairway descends from the west side of the vestibule to the basement level, accessing secondary spaces originally developed to house washrooms, a janitors' area, and storage space. The stairway is protected by a marble and wrought iron railing and gate with a marble handrail overlaying scrolled wrought iron. A cast iron radiator lines a portion of the railing. A centered bronze tablet lines the curved wall above the stair, bearing the inscription, "In loving Memory of Stoughton A. Fletcher this building is erected by his son Allen M. Fletcher."

The delivery room is accessed through a pair of single-light glazed doors of a dark and highly grained wood with geometric ribbon molding framing the expansive glass lights. A transom window featuring a Roman lattice design crowns the entry. The delivery room conveys an expansive and open aspect, with the vaulted space opening to the circulation counter and stacks to the south, and to reading rooms on either side, with intricate arched ceiling detailing demarcating the spaces between these distinct areas. The floor of the delivery room features colored tile mosaic, with a red and green tile Greek key motif border framing the perimeter, and softly curving red and green tile ribboning and starburst patterning accentuating each edge of the white tile floor. Anchoring corner walls are of Italian marble, with groupings of Doric pilasters supporting the vaulted ceilings. The stucco plaster ceiling is of an intricate lattice paneling featuring a hierarchy of gilt rope molding and a soft blue and white palette. Each arch demarcating the delivery room from the surroundings spaces is heightened with gilt molding and inset pale blue plaster paneling on the arch.

The two reading rooms flank the delivery room, with each accessed through the open arches discussed above. The rooms are comparable in treatment and design, presenting a symmetrical framing of the delivery room and stacks. Floors are oak, currently covered in low-profile carpet panels. Walls are of intricately paneled oak to a height of ten feet, with plaster walls above. Anchoring oak pilasters and oak molding surrounding the arched windows and interior arched entries provide texture and visual continuity. Each reading room features a prominent fireplace, since converted from wood burning status, with elaborate surrounds of oak and Caen Limestone, featuring fluted wood pilasters supporting a scrolled bracket overmantel of oak. In the west reading room, the mantle features a carved Caen Limestone Fletcher coat of arms. In the east reading room, the mantle features the Vermont State Seal, carved in Caen Limestone. The furnishings in each reading room are largely original, with large oak reading tables and chairs, a variety of light fixtures including brass table lamps with suspended pairs of lights and a number of Tiffany stained-glass table lamps. A variety of artwork lines the walls, much original to the building or donated by the Fletcher family, and a small number of periodical shelves discreetly line the perimeter. The vaulted plaster paneled ceilings are of a restrained tone, with a white and cream colored form demarcated by a rectangular grid patterning. Coved molding with a gilt application frames the vaulted ceiling where it meets the wall.

The book room is accessed through either reading room, with single doorways framed in dark oak surrounds. The book room is also visible from the delivery room, separated by a circulation counter composed of a single 10-foot-long, three-foot-wide slab of Vermont's Proctor marble.

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The book room is of a less embellished form, with oak floors, currently covered by carpet, rows of original light oak book stacks with integrated suspended lighting fixtures, and plaster walls and ceiling in a white and blue color scheme with subtle gilt detailing. Arched windows are framed in light oak surrounds. The coved ceiling presents a heightened form as it meets the walls and frames the generous arched windows, with gothic arch plaster work framing each window and gilt-toned crown molding lining the wall between each window opening.

As originally designed, a small librarian's room extended from the west side of the book room, recessed behind the west reading room. The small room is simple in plan, with a square form anchored by a simple fireplace, now non-operable, with dark oak and brick surrounds. Walls are painted plaster, with a rose hue, with white ceilings and gilt crown molding. Door and window framing is of dark oak, in keeping with the woodwork in the reading rooms. The original form of this room was altered by the placement of the 1964 children's wing, with the addition now extending from the original southwest corner of the building at the librarian's room, as detailed in the following section discussing the 1964 addition (see **Figure 23** for a depiction of the library plan following the 1964 addition).

The basement of the Fletcher Memorial Library was initially designed to house secondary operational support functions, with the public-facing program space limited to the first level. As detailed in the description of the vestibule, a circular marble stair accesses the basement from the vestibule, with an additional secondary access from an exterior door on the secondary (south) side of the building. At the base of the marble stairs, a janitor's room and lavatory originally opened to a largely open plan unfinished volume underlying the entirety of the building. As developed, floors in the basement are concrete, with stone and brick foundation walls. A coal bin room was sited at the south end of the basement, now repurposed for updated mechanical systems. Of note, brick barrel vaulted ceilings underlie the central delivery room, supporting the stone mosaic floor above. Steel railroad beams painted with "Ludlow, Vermont," markers provide structural support for the brick ceiling.

At present, the basement has been altered from its original utilitarian form and function. As discussed in more detail in the following section related to the 1964 children's wing addition, the basement footprint was augmented with this addition with several secondary spaces and a children's program room added to the west side of the building under the new addition. Additionally, the unfinished concrete, brick, and stone basement volume has been augmented for public-facing use, with placement of secondary community spaces at the basement level that included placement of sheetrock partition walls and ceiling panels, light fixtures, and floor coverings. As such, these secondary basement spaces convey an extended period of development, with the brick and stone foundation, structural support massing, and an original secondary utility access stair extending out the south side of the building conveying original structural elements, and ongoing alteration evident with the basement addition and modern material coverings. It is also important to note that an array of historic period library furnishings including tables, chairs, shelving, and historic period reading materials and ephemera fill the basement spaces. In addition, portions of the foundation wall at the southeast corner of the original building appear to be fragments of repurposed gravestone, with faint inscriptions

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evident. The stone is potentially associated with the Ludlow Universalist Church, which was sited just east of the library site and demolished in 1901.²

Interior: 1964 Children's Wing Addition

The 1964 children's wing addition extends from the southwest corner of the original building, with a door extending from the west reading room and from the librarian's room accessing a hallway that extends down a short set of stairs to the children's area. The original exterior brick wall of the main library building is evident along this hall, anchored by quoining and original exterior windows. The interior treatment of the addition stands in strong contrast to the ornate and heavily accentuated main body, with a pragmatic and minimalistic use of sheetrock, concrete block, and linoleum tile. This area has been somewhat altered from its original 1964 design by the 2004 development of an accessible entry off the rear of the building as well as a lift accessing the basement level (see **Figure 24** in Additional Documentation). The main body of the children's room is accessed through a narrow hall, accessed through the interior of the main library or through a pair of exterior doors fronting Main Street (discussed in exterior description). The children's room is a singular rectangular volume with a small play and reading nook in the southeast corner, with carpeted concrete floors, painted concrete block walls, and suspended tile ceiling with fluorescent lighting. The room is well-lit by natural light from the large arched windows that frame the north and west sides. An array of modern bookcases hold children's books. The simple, pragmatic form of the space is markedly different than that of the main building; however, it is reflective of the library's continued mission to serve all generations of Ludlow residents.

The 1964 addition expanded the original basement of the Fletcher Memorial Library (original basement discussed in previous section). This new area of the basement is accessed through a stairway that extends from the entrance hall, with a straight set of stairs characterized by sheetrock walls, metal pipe rail, and rubberized safety treads. A modern wood door opens to a finished basement area that holds a concrete-walled activity room, lit by lightwell windows and featuring a suspended tile ceiling and fluorescent lighting. Linoleum floors underlie the space. A hall accesses several secondary spaces including a storage room and kitchen, with the kitchen placed in the 2004 renovations that included accessible access to the rear of the building. Materials are modern, with sheetrock, linoleum, and modern carpet. Of note, the original footings of the building are evident along the access hall, indicating the juncture of the original footprint and successive new components in 1964 and 2004.

Integrity

The physical integrity of the Fletcher Memorial Library remains very high, and the building readily conveys its central identity as an early twentieth century free library. The building's embedded community setting is a key component of this integrity, located on Main Street fronting Veteran's Memorial Park and proximate to Ludlow's central village core. The Renaissance Revival design of the building expresses high integrity, with a symmetrical and clearly articulated exterior form featuring restrained stylistic allusions and an interior

² "At the Churches," *The Vermont Tribune*, May 10, 1901.

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demarcated by heightened ornamentation. The wide range of materials employed in the building are original to construction, with brick, limestone, marble, oak, plaster, and other elements largely original to the construction period and expressive of a cohesive material design. Workmanship is readily discerned through the building's physical form, with the design and materials reflecting a strong sense of craft and architectural skill. Through this overall material and design integrity, the building's feeling and association as a public free library retain key associations to the period of significance, and the building retains ample physical and contextual integrity to convey its significance under the criteria of the National Register. Alterations to the building, including the 1964 addition and 2004 accessible entrance, are subservient to the original construction and do not detract from the building's high sense of integrity as a historic property.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1901-1964

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Helmer, Charles Hood (Architect 1964 Addition)

Page, Samuel Francis (Architect Original 1901 Library)

Rogers, J.H. (Builder Original 1901 Library)

Serri, Ralph (stone carver for portions of original library³)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Fletcher Memorial Library is locally significant under Criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for its role in the educational development of Ludlow, Vermont and its notable Renaissance Revival architectural design, with an exterior and interior form that is expressive of significant strands of revival-influenced design and an array of noteworthy material and symbolic elements presenting a cohesive public-facing architectural form. Completed in 1901 in the center of the Village of Ludlow, the Fletcher Memorial Library was funded by banker and Vermont Governor (1912-1915) Allen M. Fletcher as a tribute to his father, Stoughton A. Fletcher, born in Ludlow in 1808, and developed as a “monument to his memory and a habitation for the light of a just mankind.” Development of the library was a locally significant strand of a broad free public library movement in Vermont, and in turn the

³ “The History of the Italian People in Ludlow,” Unpublished Manuscript on file at the Fletcher Memorial Library: Fletcher Memorial Library and Fletcher Family Archival Documents.

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nation, that characterized the late nineteenth and early twentieth century period, with the development of robust community libraries viewed as a critical component of both civic form and American democracy. As a locally significant cultural, architectural, and artistic expression of this broad impulse, the Fletcher Memorial Library bears significance under the criteria of the NRHP. While a mid-twentieth century children's wing addition expanded the footprint of the building, the addition is subservient in design and does not detract from the building's significant original design and spatial operational organization. The period of significance for the property is demarcated by the year of completion, 1901, and the construction of the Children's Wing in 1964, with this period encapsulating both the property's significant architectural design and its social significance as a free public library for the community of Ludlow and surrounding areas.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Yet it should be understood that the amount appropriated by the State [of Vermont] is intended to serve only as a stimulus to the formation of free public libraries, and will in itself accomplish very little if not supplemented by contributions from other sources, and the zealous interest and attention of those who, like Ben Franklin, "purpose to render the benefit from books more common..." persons who are interested in the intellectual welfare or material prosperity of the town.

First Biennial Report of the Board of Library Commissioners of Vermont, 1895-96.

I would like you to remember this, that in so far as a building may be made to express the life and character of a man, I have tried to make this one an expression of my father's life. The solid granite foundation suggests the strength and steadfastness of his character. The simplicity and squareness of the exterior correspond with the modesty and uprightness of his life. The beauty and richness of the interior are typical of the justness and fineness of his mind. The influences for good and the culture that lie hidden in the books are as symbols of the gentleness and beneficence of his heart. I, on my own part, wish to say I hope this library may be of service to you, and that you may find pleasure and benefit both in the building and in the books.

Fletcher Memorial Library Dedication Speech by Allen M. Fletcher, November 1, 1901.

No person with a properly constituted mind can enter the Fletcher Memorial Library without a thrill of deep gratitude, and he who abuses its privileges is worse than a traitor. Let us never forget.

The Vermont Tribune, November 8, 1901

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Origins and Development of the Fletcher Memorial Library

Plans for the Fletcher Memorial Library were announced in the July 7, 1899, edition of Ludlow's *Vermont Tribune*, with the library dedicated and opened to the public with an extensive commemorative ceremony held on November 1, 1901. As relayed in the *Tribune's* announcement for the library, the development of the public building by the scion of one of the region's leading families was viewed as both a civic and intellectual offering, placing the village of just over 2000 residents in an expanding milieu of progressive communities developing libraries across the state of Vermont:

An architect is now engaged in drawing up plans for a public building to be erected in Ludlow by Allen M. Fletcher of Indianapolis, Ind., who spends his summer here and who has been, through his father and grandfather, closely connected with Ludlow for many years, and as a memorial to them the building is to be erected and a suitable number of books placed therein... While Mr. Fletcher is not prepared to give a detailed statement of his plans at present, the library is an assured fact, and not a scheme in the air or a plan... Mr. Fletcher's purpose in erecting the building is to honor the memory of his father and grandfather and to provide something that will be a thing of beauty and an eternal benefit to the town of Ludlow and surrounding country.⁴

Fletcher's gift to Ludlow and its surrounding communities reflected an intimate and multigenerational relationship between the Fletcher family and Ludlow and its environs, with the mountains and valleys of Windsor county a defining geographic element of the family's identity even as they had moved westward to Indiana in the middle decades of the nineteenth century to develop material fortunes. As colorfully summarized in the Dedication Booklet developed for the library's opening:

Stoughton A. Fletcher was born in Ludlow, Vermont, August 22, 1808. He was the youngest of a family of 15 children. His parents were among the hardy pioneers who settled the Black River Valley in 1783. His father, Jesse Fletcher, and his mother, Lucy Keyes, were natives of Westford, Mass., and possessed the vigorous qualities of mind and body and the sturdy, virtuous characteristics of the New England fathers...

Stoughton, as well as his elder brothers, was trained in the industrious, simple habits of those early times. The old farm bears to this day the marks of his hard labor in its substantial stone walls laid by his own hands. In this school he acquired a practical knowledge of agriculture which proved to be of the highest values in his extensive land purchases in subsequent life. His great delight in nature and rural scenery is largely due, no doubt, to the influence of the charming landscapes amid which his childhood was passed. The Vermont home among the

⁴ "Public Library," *The Vermont Tribune*, July 7, 1899.

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mountains was always the dearest spot to him on earth, and there, in the last years of his life, he spent much of his time.

Mr. Fletcher went to Indianapolis in October 1831. The city at that time was not more than a flourishing Western village. He arrived without money, depending solely on his industry, his capacity for business, and the opportunity which the capital of a new State afforded for advancing his fortunes.⁵

The advancement of the Fletcher fortunes in Indianapolis was notable. By 1839, Stoughton Fletcher was a Director of the Indianapolis Branch of the State Bank of Indiana, subsequently founding a private bank, S.A. Fletcher and Company, which ultimately became Fletcher National Bank before being absorbed in the twentieth century by Bank One and later Chase Bank. In addition to his private banking interests, Stoughton held a wide range of land and development interests across Indiana, as well as interests in the Indiana Gas Light and Coke Company and the Indianapolis and Bellefontaine Railroad. By the time of his 1882 death, Stoughton Fletcher was considered one of the wealthiest and most influential of Indiana's business leaders, "a wizard of finance," although period press noted his generally conservative air and disavowal of public office. Following Stoughton's death, the Fletcher family remained prominent in Indiana business and banking circles, with son Stoughton Jr. and Grandson Stoughton II remaining at the helm of the successors to his various banking interests through the 1920s.⁶

Son Allen M. Fletcher, born in Indianapolis in 1853, followed his father's interest in business, serving as Vice-President of the Indianapolis Gas Company before moving to New York and working in Wall Street finance until the early twentieth century. Like his father, Allen Fletcher retained a lasting connection to Vermont, maintaining a summer home in Cavendish, "Chuckle Hill," and ultimately acquiring much of the original Fletcher homestead in Ludlow, portions of which now comprise the Fletcher Farm Foundation. Unlike his father, who eschewed politics, Allen Fletcher quickly emerged as a prominent Republican voice in Vermont after moving full-time to the state, elected to the House of Representatives from Cavendish in 1902, to the Senate for Windsor County in 1904, and ultimately as Vermont Governor from 1912 to 1915.⁷

As described in the Fletcher Memorial Library's 1901 Dedication, the library was envisaged by Allen Fletcher as both a lasting testament to Stoughton Fletcher and the Fletcher family and as a lasting civic investment in the citizens of Ludlow and Vermont. As detailed by Fletcher in his dedication speech:

Ladies and Gentlemen, and, I trust, my friends: perhaps you will allow me to add to this, at present, a citizen of the state of Vermont. It is my home, and I expect it always will be. For a number of years I have thought of some fitting memorial to my father in this his native town, which would also be of some practical use to the

⁵ *The Book of the Fletcher Memorial Library at Ludlow, Vermont 1902.*

⁶ "Fletcher was Name to Conjure with for Years in City Finance History," *The Indianapolis Times*, May 11, 1933; "Encyclopedia of Indianapolis: Stoughton A. Fletcher Senior." Accessed on April 5, 2024 at [Stoughton A. Fletcher Sr. - indyencyclopedia.org](https://www.indyencyclopedia.org).

⁷ William Richard Cutter. *New England Families: Genealogical and Memorial* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1914), 1456; *The Book of the Fletcher Memorial Library at Ludlow, Vermont 1902.*

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people of this community. I finally decided that a library would best accomplish that purpose.

Two years ago last May I employed an architect, Mr. Page of Boston, to prepare plans, and I took up the subject in its broad sense. Let me say to you that the building of a library is in itself a liberal education. To those of you present who have built libraries, I am prepared to apologize for any mistakes in this one, but to those of you who have not, I would say you still have something to learn. Some months were spent in the preparation of the plans, looking at small libraries here and near Boston and New York. Finally the present plan was adopted... Finally we have it in its present state, very nearly completed. I thought you might be growing impatient...

We have about eight thousand volumes, and the capacity of the building is about eighteen thousand. Being warned by a prominent physician that literary dyspepsia is a disease difficult to cure, I thought I would begin with a moderate number of books, digest them, and gradually increase the number, finally bringing it up to its full capacity.

Some of you here present, perhaps quite a number, remember my father. His early life was spent here, about the time he became of age he went west. His active business career was in Indiana. He came back here in the late years of his life and made his home among these hills that he loved. His heart was here although his business interests were there. I had thought to say something in reference to his character, but as I approach that subject I do not feel that I can trust myself to pursue it. But I would like you to remember this, that in so far as a building may be made to express the life and character of a man, I have tried to make this one an expression of my father's life.⁸

The November 1, 1901, dedication was a well-documented Ludlow affair, with hundreds of attendees and onlookers and attended by then-Governor William W. Stickney, Allen Fletcher, and a "representative gathering including not only the student and the bookworm but the busy man of affairs and the house mother." As detailed in *The Vermont Tribune*:

The afternoon was practically observed as a holiday. The stores were closed and arrangements had been made for those who work in the mills to attend if they so desired, and many of them did. It was a day that had long been looked forward to. The exercises were impressive in their simplicity, and had almost the solemnity of a religious service.⁹

Indeed, many period accounts of the establishment of the Fletcher Memorial Library were tinged with a religious overtone, weaving a conviction in the educational power of the library and its manifold books with an expression of a social and moral higher order, as expressed by Reverend

⁸ *The Book of the Fletcher Memorial Library at Ludlow, Vermont 1902.*

⁹ "Fletcher Library," *The Vermont Tribune*, November 8, 1901; "Library Cards," *The Vermont Tribune*, November 8, 1901.

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Matthew H. Buckham, President of the University of Vermont, who also spoke at the library's dedication:

To get the largest benefit from reading one must read in various lines. The man who reads no history lives in the narrow horizon of the present. He who reads no poetry is apt to live the dull life of practical reality. Why did God give us all some degree of imagination and why did he put so much poetry into the flower and the cloud, the bird and the breeze, into the starry heavens, but to suggest something better than the dull reality that closes us in...

Finally, read gratefully. You don't know how I envy Mr. Fletcher the pleasure which he has in making this gift; the pleasure he has and is going to have. It is just what I would like to do if I had the money to do it with, and for years as I have been speaking in different parts of the state, I have been throwing out hints to this effect. Young men, when you get rich remember your native town and give it a library.¹⁰

The Free Library Movement in Vermont

The 1901 development of the Fletcher Memorial Library was firmly embedded within a state and national context of public "free" library development, a local expression of a larger movement often referred to as the "Free Library Movement." While the most high-profile American exemplar of this impulse was industrialist Andrew Carnegie and his "Carnegie Libraries"—with 1,679 such libraries erected across America at a cost of \$40 million between 1886 and 1919; the broadscale development and endowment of community libraries was a defining characteristic of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century period, with wealthy benefactors unifying around the democratizing, moralizing, and Americanizing influence of the library on the nation's rural and urban citizens.¹¹

In Vermont, this philanthropic and social impulse underlay a range of notable library developments across the state in both rural and more populous communities, with numerous libraries partially or fully-funded by private benefactors, including but not limited to the George Peabody Library in Post Mills/Thetford (1867); St. Johnsbury's Athenaeum, donated by town benefactor Horace Fairbanks (1871); the Norman Williams Public Library in Woodstock (1885); Danville's Pope Memorial Library (1890); Chester's Whiting Library (1892); the Chelsea Public Library (1894); the Gilbert Hart Library in Wallingford (1894); Bradford's Woods Library (1895); the Maclure Library in Pittsford (1895); Montpelier's Kellogg-Hubbard Library (1895); the Springfield Town Library (1895); Hardwick's Jeudevine Memorial Library (1897); Newbury's Tenney Memorial Library (1897); Newport's Goodrich Memorial Library (1899); the Hitchcock Museum and Library in Westfield (1900); St. Albans' Smith Memorial Library (1902); the Kimball Public Library in Randolph (1903); Burlington's Fletcher Free Library, a

¹⁰ *The Book of the Fletcher Memorial Library at Ludlow, Vermont 1902.*

¹¹ Peter Mickelson. "American Society and the Public Library in the Thought of Andrew Carnegie," *The Journal of Library History* (Volume 10, No. 2, April 1975); Sidney Ditzion. "Social Reform, Education, and the Library, 1850-1900," *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* (Volume 9, No. 2, April 1939).

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Carnegie-funded library completed in 1904; Derby Line's Haskell Free Library (1904); Pomfret's Abbott Memorial Library (1905); the Brown Public Library in Northfield (1906); the Fair Haven Free Library, donated by Andrew Carnegie (1906); Gates Memorial Library in Hartford (1907); Franklin's Haston Library (1908); Barre City's Aldrich Public Library (1908); the Rockingham Free Public Library (1909); Vergennes' Bixby Memorial Free Library (1912); Morrisville's Morristown Centennial Library, also a Carnegie Library (1913); the Joslin Memorial Library in Waitsfield (1913); and Hyde Park's Lanpher Memorial Library (1916).¹²

While many in number and disparate in their scale and architectural temperament, the wave of libraries constructed during this concentrated period of development were bound by key overarching themes. First, virtually all were realized from the largesse of wealthy benefactors, a number of whom, like the Fletcher family, made their fortunes outside of Vermont but held close familial or social associations to the state. Second, in their design and stylings the libraries displayed a remarkable array of trappings, from the striking and lofty French Second Empire St. Johnsbury Athenaeum (1871) to the compact and stolid Richardsonian Romanesque Jeudevine Library in Hardwick (1897); the staid Neo-Classical visage of the Bixby Library in Vergennes (1912) coupled with the more exuberant Beau-Arts inspired Fletcher Free Library in Burlington (1904); with numerous more restrained and simplified examples between, including modest and sturdy wood-frame and clad forms like that of Westfield's Hitchcock Library in rural Orleans County or repurposed modest Greek Revival town halls and other adapted buildings smattered across villages around the state. Through this dynamic stylized array, the era's embrace of a range of architectural stylings, some monumental—some modest, created a striking language of civic design, and as importantly, a set of architectural ideals framing the act of reading and free library education. Lastly, the extraordinary rise of the Free Library Movement in Vermont and elsewhere was tethered to important societal and political ideals around education, literacy, and civic betterment for the public. As summarized by Horace Fairbanks in his dedication of St. Johnsbury's Athenaeum in 1871, "It was his highest ambition and fullest expectation that the people make the rooms of the Athenaeum a favorite place of resort for patient research, reading, and study." In the 1905 dedication of Pomfret's Abbott Memorial Library, benefactor Judge Ira A. Abbott declaimed, "Every resident of the town will, I trust, feel a certain satisfaction and pride in being a part owner, and be led to question whether he cannot, in some way suggested by what he sees here in and about the building, make his own more attractive for his family and so for himself." Thus, the library came to symbolize both the betterment of the public mind and the civic sphere, with the two served by the architectural form of the library and the educational opportunities found within.¹³

Importantly, by 1894 the impulses lying behind the Free Library Movement had been codified into Vermont Statute, further catalyzing and normalizing library development. Act Number 37 of the Acts of 1894, *An Act To Promote The Establishment Of Free Public Libraries*, embedded both financial and technical assistance in the development and management of libraries within

¹² Patricia W. Belding. *Where the Books Are: History and Architecture of Vermont's Public Libraries with Photos and Anecdotes* (Barre, Vermont: Potash Brook Publishing, 1996).

¹³ National Historic Landmark Designation Form: The Athenaeum, St. Johnsbury, Vermont (National Register Reference No. 96000970); National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form: Abbott Memorial Library, Pomfret, Vermont (National Register Reference No. 14001141).

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the state apparatus. Under the Act, the Governor appointed a five member Board of Library Commissioners who were tasked with advising library development and operations across the state and providing funds for books and maintenance to libraries that agreed to operate under certain professionalized frameworks. Importantly, the legislation was not intended to *fully fund* such libraries, but instead to provide incentives and assistance that would encourage towns, and perhaps more importantly benefactors, to initiate such funding. This Commission was also tasked with biennial reporting responsibilities, which serve as a robust archival record of the development and professionalization of the library field in Vermont during the period, as detailed in the *First Biennial Report of the Board of Library Commissioners of Vermont, 1895-1896*:

Yet it should be understood that the amount appropriated by the State is intended to serve only as a stimulus to the formation of free public libraries, and will in itself accomplish very little if not supplemented by contributions from other sources, and the zealous interest and attention of those who, like Ben Franklin, "purpose to render the benefit from books more common." The Commissioners therefore appeal to you to bring the matter of the establishment of a free public library in your town before the citizens by informal or public meetings, and to stimulate them to secure funds for the purpose by entertainments and social gatherings, or by soliciting subscriptions of money and donation of books from persons who are interested in the intellectual welfare or material prosperity of the town.¹⁴

By the *Fourth Biennial Report* (1901-1902), the year of construction of the Fletcher Memorial Library, the Board of Commissioners noted expansive growth in library development across the state:

During the two years since the law was enacted, sixty towns, representing every county in the State, have taken favorable action upon this matter, made the required appropriation and have received through the Commissioners the books provided by the State. The list of books furnished the different towns were not duplicates but each list was made up by the Commissioners, with careful reference to the situation and needs of that individual town, the books already available for its use and the expressed wishes of its trustees. For this reason the number of books was not the same for all of the towns, but varied from 90 to 143. In these towns, with the State appropriation as a nucleus, very creditable libraries have been established and are in successful operation, and the earnestness and enthusiasm in the matter everywhere manifested give great promise of their future usefulness. Many of these town libraries have been increased by gifts of books from individuals and organizations of various kinds, and in some instances liberal endowments in money have been made by persons of wealth, who saw in the public library a most useful and far-reaching channel for their benevolence. The operation of the law during the first two years of its existence, so far as can be

¹⁴ *First Biennial Report of the Board of Library Commissioners of Vermont: 1895-1896* (Burlington, Vermont: Free Press Association Printers, 1896), 9.

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*now judged, has been eminently successful, by setting in motion influences most potent for the social, intellectual and moral advancement of the people.*¹⁵

Fletcher Memorial Library was certainly the product of one of those “potent influences,” and was noted as such in the *Biennial Report*, with the library denoted as a “Class 4 Library: Towns in which there are free libraries which have no connection to the town.” As detailed in the report:

*The Fletcher Memorial Library was dedicated and opened to the public on All Saints Day, November 1, 1901. On April 1, 1902, five months later, there were over 700 names registered as takers of books, the population of the surrounding territory throughout which the Library is available, being about 2500. The circulation from the start has been over 500 books a week. Progressive work has been attempted along several lines. Informal talks are given by the librarian to the students of the academy and district teachers on the use of the library and reference books. Small traveling libraries are sent to the district schools for use of the scholars under the direction of the teacher. The admittance of the public to the book room is proving a perfect success. No books have been lost and the disarrangement on the shelves is slight...The citizens of Ludlow are not unmindful of the advantages deriving from Mr. Fletcher’s splendid gift nor unappreciative of the donor.*¹⁶

Thus, the 1901 development of the Fletcher Memorial Library was embedded within a broad and rapidly developing strand of “Free Library” development, with the singular generosity of Allen M. Fletcher’s gift to Ludlow reflecting an important social, civic, and educational context shaping community’s—both rural and urban—across the state and nation.

Architectural Framework of the Fletcher Memorial Library

As summarized in the previous section, the development and stylistic form of public libraries conveyed numerous contextual strands, representing a physical embodiment of the taste and means of the benefactor; serving as a public and often monumental civic face for communities; and standing as expressive symbols for the uplifting and clarifying power of education and literature. Within this multifaceted development context, Allen M. Fletcher commissioned architect Samuel Francis (S.F.) Page of Boston architectural firm Fehmer & Page to design the library, envisioned as a “low, one-story structure, the style being that of the later English Renaissance.”¹⁷

Born in the Boston suburb of Brookline in 1857, S.F. Page practiced in partnership with the German-born Carl Fehmer (1838-1923) from 1882 through 1908, when Fehmer retired and Page partnered with Brooks Frothingham through 1912, continuing to practice independently though

¹⁵ *Fourth Biennial Report of the Board of Library Commissioners of Vermont: 1901-1902* (St. Johnsbury, Vermont: Press of the Caledonian Company, 1902), 12.

¹⁶ *Fourth Biennial Report of the Board of Library Commissioners of Vermont: 1901-1902*, 80.

¹⁷ *The Book of the Fletcher Memorial Library at Ludlow, Vermont 1902*.

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his retirement in 1918. Page's work was characterized by a mixture of urban residential construction, including many townhouse commissions in Boston's Back Bay and the Beaconsfield Terraces in Brookline, constructed in 1889-1892 as attached townhouses in a variety of styles including Châteauesque, Flemish, and Georgian Revival; as well as a number of prominent commercial and civic projects, most notably the 1880s Bell Telephone Building on Milk Street (demolished 1970s); the Chicago-style 1894 Worthington Building at 33 State Street, considered one of the first steel-framed office buildings in Boston; the 1895 Colonial Revival Oliver Ames High School in Easton; and the sprawling Hotel Beaconsfield, a much-publicized hotel constructed in 1905 in Brookline. As an assemblage, Page's portfolio reflected an adept usage of a range of stylistic allusions from the period, with expressions in a variety of revival styles, from elaborate bowed bays on his brick townhouses, classically-inspired commercial detailing, and exuberant European-inspired forms on his Brookline work at Beaconsfield Terraces and Hotel Beaconsfield. Of note, Page's work with Allen M. Fletcher on the Fletcher Memorial Library led to a larger partnership between the two, with Page also commissioned to design Fletcher's grand Tudor Revival "English Cotswold" stone residence at "Chuckle Hill" in Cavendish in 1906. Frederick Law Olmsted designed the residence's picturesque mountain grounds, with the stone for the building quarried on site and paired with California redwood paneling and timbering.¹⁸

On the "strong recommendation of the architect," the Fletcher Memorial Library was sited on a lot facing the village park, located in the central civic core of the Village of Ludlow. Contractor J.H. Rogers of Middlebury was commissioned to build the library, conducting site preparation work and overseeing construction. Rogers was responsible for a number of public and residential buildings in Middlebury and its environs, also working with other high profile commissions including at Shelburne Farms under contract with the Webb family. The archival record also indicates that a local Italian stone carver was employed to execute exterior stone carving work, with Ludlow-resident Ralph Serri, born in Gragnana near Carrara and employed in the Proctor marble industry, credited for exterior carving work. It is unknown if he or other local carvers developed the interior carvings, most notably the Vermont State Seal and Fletcher Coat of Arms.¹⁹

As documented in *The Vermont Tribune*, the two-year construction process was closely watched:

The construction was necessarily slow. A library cannot be built in a day; perplexing questions and annoying hindrances succeeded one another. But the builders as "in the elder days of art, wrought with greatest care," making

¹⁸ National Register of Historic Places Nomination for Beaconsfield Terraces Historic District, (National Register Reference# 85003248); "The New Beaconsfield," *Boston Evening Transcript*, March 17, 1904; "Real Estate Matters," *Boston Evening Transcript*, May 7, 1890; "Back Bay Houses: Genealogies of Back Bay Houses," accessed on April 8th 2024 at [Samuel Francis Page | Back Bay Houses](#); "Vermont Division for Historic Preservation to Thornton W. Burnet, Jr., September 1, 1981, Re: Chuckle Hill." Correspondence accessed at [Cavendish National Register Advisory Council Action_00000050.pdf \(vermont.gov\)](#).

¹⁹ "Local Affairs," *The Vermont Tribune*, March 29, 1901; "Concerning Our Italian Citizens," *The Vermont Tribune*, May 13, 1915.

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*necessary changes and possible improvements, aiming at the characteristic and consistent beauty which the finished product undeniably presents.*²⁰

The Fletcher Memorial Library was characterized by a monumental, yet restrained and generally understated, exterior and a rich and more materially effusive interior form, an allusion to both the Yankee austerity of Stoughton Fletcher and the rich inner workings of his, and in turn a reading public's, educated and cultured mind. The library's original features, documented in detail in the 1901 dedication materials, still remain largely intact to the present, with a physical form that readily conveys that of the construction period, as described in the dedication booklet of 1901:

The Fletcher Memorial Library of Ludlow, Vermont, stands on a beautiful site on Main Street, facing a small public park; on the south and west of the building are extensive grounds which in time will be beautified by shrubs and flowers. The building is a low, one-story, structure, the style being that of the later English Renaissance. The front is a free adaptation of the Winchester School at Winchester, England. The entrance is in the center of the building, the wings on either side forming the reading rooms. The walls are of red brick with heavy Bedford limestone trimmings; the base of Medford granite; the roof of green slate with copper ridges. Over the entrance, supported by rusticated Doric pilasters, is a broken pediment carved with the Fletcher coat of arms. Above this is the name and date of erection. Over the windows on the front are elaborate festoons emblematic of "Plenty" carved from the limestone.

The interior of the vestibule is a square with semi-circular ends. On the left a marble staircase with wrought iron railings leads to the basement. The entire walls of the vestibule are of marble with Ionic pilasters; the ceilings and floor of marble mosaic—green, white, and red. On the left wall is inserted a bronze tablet bearing the inscription which appears on the third page of this book: "In loving memory of Stoughton A. Fletcher this building is erected by his son, Allen M. Fletcher."

The Delivery Room is square. The walls are of white Italian marble with Doric pilasters. The vaulted, stucco ceiling is beautifully brought out in blue and brown water color. The floor is colored marble mosaic of an elaborate design. The delivery desk is formed by one slab of Vermont marble, ten feet long and three feet wide.

The reading rooms on either side of the delivery room are finished in antique oak, paneled and pilastered to a height of ten feet. The walls above are dark green. The ceilings are arched and paneled, the beams being brought out in color. Elaborate mantels over large fireplaces, in each reading room, are made of Caen stone, a peculiar composition quarried only in Caen, a town near Paris, France. The mantel in the east room is carved with the Fletcher coat of arms; the one in

²⁰ *The Book of the Fletcher Memorial Library at Ludlow, Vermont 1902.*

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the west room with the seal of the State of Vermont. Both rooms are finished with heavy oak tables and chairs.

The book room is directly back of the delivery room. The finish and book cases are light oak; the walls are light buff and white. There are seven thousand books now on the shelves and the room has a capacity for eighteen thousand. The librarian's room is in the angle formed by the west reading room and the book room. It is finished in dark oak with rose colored walls.

The number and size of the windows is such that the entire building is perfectly lighted by day; and by night the artificial light of electricity is scarcely less satisfactory. The combination of the plain but substantial exterior, together with the richness and grandeur of the interior, makes a building of rare beauty and one unique among libraries.²¹

In addition to a refined and cohesive architectural aesthetic, the Fletcher Memorial Library was also credited for its progressive operational form, with its “open stack” system lauded as a democratic and community-centered approach to library functions, as described in 1901:

Mr. W. R. Eastman, Inspector of the Public Library Department of the University of the State of New York, with headquarters at the State Capitol of Albany, has spoken with commendation of the plan of the Fletcher Memorial Library in his public addresses, and has furnished the following statement of his criticism for this book: “In showing and comparing various library floorplans I have contrasted that of the Fletcher Memorial Library with another of similar form which cuts off the book room from any possible communication directly with the reading rooms, while the book room at Ludlow overlaps both reading rooms and has a door opening into each of them. One library emphasizes the idea of security of books and the other that of their usefulness, and in this respect yours is much to be commended. The compact grouping of the rooms, bringing them under the ready supervision from the desk, is admirable. The ample height and space for adding books is an excellent feature.”

Both as a fulcrum point for the civic development of Ludlow and as an architectural expression, the Fletcher Memorial Library was uniformly embraced as a key underpinning for Ludlow's continued development and prosperity, part of a succession of civic advancements that would cement the community as a prospering village. As opined in the weeks following the building's dedication by the *Vermont Tribune*:

Men have taken a new lease of life. They have believed in Ludlow, and from that notable day we have gone on from prosperity to prosperity. Since the completion of the [Black River] Academy there has followed in quick succession three large manufactories, two large business blocks, three churches, a system of waterworks, and the best sewerage system of any town in the state; the installation of an

²¹ *The Book of the Fletcher Memorial Library at Ludlow, Vermont 1902.*

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electric light plant, and miles of concrete walk, and there is now under construction a three-story brick block, also a new town hall. In the language of the street, everything seems to be coming our way. Now we have come to another historic period. There is not so large an assemblage, not so many brilliant men, but we are nonetheless appreciative of what has been done, and what it means in the giving of this beautiful library edifice.

Within a week of opening, the Fletcher Memorial Library had filed 248 signed readers cards, with hundreds more in the following months. The collection's 8000 volumes, many selected by State Board of Library Commissioners Secretary Mary Lemest Titcomb, embraced a range of topics and genres, from *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, to Jane Adams *Democracy and Social Ethics*; G. A. Smith's *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament* to G.T. Fairchild's *Rural Wealth and Welfare*; with lighter fiction including A.C. Hegan's *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch*; and, in youth materials, R.L. Stevenson's *Child's Garden of Verses*.²²

While Allen M. Fletcher had fully funded the library, also providing an endowment for ongoing operation and staffing, in Ludlow's Town Meeting of 1902 residents extended a broadly supported resolution to alleviate some expenses from the Trustees, an offer which has remained in place to the present:

Whereas Mr. Allen M, Fletcher has presented to the Trustees of the Fletcher Memorial Library and through them to the citizens of Ludlow and adjoining towns as a memorial to his father, the late Stoughton A, Fletcher, the land, building, and books known as the Fletcher Memorial Library in Ludlow: therefore be it resolved by the voters of Ludlow in annual town meeting assembled, that in token of appreciation of this gift a vote of thanks is hereby extended to Mr. Allen M. Fletcher from the Town of Ludlow; and be it further resolved, that the Selectmen of the Town of Ludlow be authorized and directed to draw orders on the town treasurer payable to the water commissioners and electric light commissioners of the village of Ludlow to defray expenses, and additional orders to pay all bills for fuel, until the next annual meeting and thereafter until otherwise voted.²³

Ongoing Evolution of the Fletcher Memorial Library

As evidenced by library archival records and local periodicals from the first decades of the twentieth century, the Fletcher Memorial Library served as an evolving community institution, with growth in collections, programming, and community breadth. By the early 1920s, the library's initial 8,000 volumes had expanded to 15,000, with a formal inventory of holdings in 1922 leading to a reorganization of the original stacks. Regular postings in *The Vermont Tribune*

²² "Fletcher Memorial Library Classified List of Books Added from October 1, 1901 to October 1, 1902." Unpublished Manuscript on file at the Fletcher Memorial Library: Fletcher Memorial Library and Fletcher Family Archival Documents.

²³ "History of the Fletcher Memorial Library." Unpublished Manuscript on file at the Fletcher Memorial Library: Fletcher Memorial Library and Fletcher Family Archival Documents.

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and other regional periodicals provided updates of *au courant* additions to the collection, with new books regularly added, exemplified by a December 1920 posting including Edith Wharton's popular serial novel *Age of Innocence* coupled with Irvin S. Cobb's *The Abandoned Farmers*, a satirical commentary addressing the urban-rural divide documenting a city dweller's attempt to "go back to the land." In addition to maintaining a robust collection across a range of non-fiction and fiction types, Fletcher Memorial Library's librarians appear to have served a diffuse range of regional research needs, with the library's archival records including detailed and painstaking correspondence around a range of local research topics. Exemplifying this, in 1948, Eleanor St. George of Quechee wrote the library for information related to the history of the defunct Ludlow Toy Manufacturing Company in support of her book *The Dolls of Yesterday*. In 1949, librarian Mrs. Royal Gladding initiated correspondence with the State of Vermont Development Commission, Vermont Historical Society, and the University of Vermont News Bureau to ascertain the origins of the name "Okemo," the name of the adjacent Vermont State Forest and soon to be opened ski area (Okemo Ski Resort opened 1955-56). All correspondents agreed the name was obscure and admittedly difficult to tether to the area.²⁴

Other small missives indicate the intertwined identity of the library and community, with *The Vermont Tribune* detailing intimate updates like that of April 15, 1920, detailing that the "Pussy Willows on the counter of the Fletcher Memorial Library are a cheering indication of the season." As a civic hub, the library hosted an array of diverse community affairs over time, establishing an annual flower show that filled the reading rooms with an array of color, as described in a 1931 *Vermont Tribune*, "The flowers brought in ranged all the way from wild woodland and meadow blossoms to delicate hot-house roses. Perhaps the most striking show was made by the peonies, shown in great profusion." The library also hosted art shows and readings, with forty oil paintings loaned by the Landscape Club of Washington in 1930 and a "Good Neighbor Tour" of locally-prominent speakers, including a 1940 lecture by Mrs. Mary Charleton (Fletcher), daughter of Allen M. Fletcher, who read her father's journal from a trip to Brazil in 1868 to a rapt audience of, "very good attendance." Small entries in *The Vermont Tribune* also indicate the prosaic—and likely timeless—challenges of running a community library, with a 1922 article entitled "Library to Enforce Delinquency Fines," quoting Supervisor of Trustees Fanny B. Fletcher, daughter of Allen Fletcher, noting that, "Patrons of the library have become quite careless in their book loans, and thereby deprive others of the pleasure of their volumes which lie forgotten on their desks and ought to be in circulation."²⁵

While benefactor Allen M. Fletcher died in 1922 at the age of 68, the library maintained a close relationship with the Fletcher family, with Allen M. Fletcher's daughter Fanny Fletcher serving as a Trustee for 52 years, retiring to a position of Honorary Trustee in 1963 which she maintained until her death in 1966. Fanny Fletcher also became an influential force in

²⁴ "Library Inventory Begun on Monday, *The Vermont Tribune*, August 4, 1922; "New Books," *The Vermont Tribune*, December 23, 1920; "Fletcher Memorial Librarian Correspondence." Unpublished correspondence on file at the Fletcher Memorial Library, Fletcher Memorial Library and Fletcher Family Archival Documents.

²⁵ "Library Inventory Begun on Monday, *The Vermont Tribune*, Friday August 4, 1922; "New Books," *The Vermont Tribune*, December 23, 1920; "Many Attend Flower Display at Fletcher Memorial Library," *The Vermont Tribune*, July 1, 1931; "Oil Paintings at Ludlow Library," *The Vermont Tribune*, January 24, 1930; "Ludlow Personals," *The Springfield Reporter*, February 1, 1940; "Town Talk," *The Vermont Tribune*, April 15, 1920; "Library to Enforce Delinquency Fines," *The Vermont Tribune*, July 14, 1922; "Native Ferns," *The Vermont Journal*, June 27, 1940.

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Vermont's library community, appointed in 1908 to the Vermont Library Board of Commissioners and President of the Vermont Library Association in 1916. Thus, upon Allen Fletcher's death in 1922, his legacy was securely tethered to the building through both his philanthropic gift and the ongoing Fletcher family relationship to the community library, as relayed in the *Vermont Tribune* in a memorial in 1922:

*The people of the Black River Valley and vicinity need no chiseled monument of stone to remind them of Allen M. Fletcher or to record his beneficent deeds. The Fletcher Memorial Library in Ludlow, erected in the memory of his father Stoughton L. Fletcher, one of the pioneers of the town, is a splendid memorial not only of filial respect, but of a spirit of true philanthropy and a keen sense of the highest good of the community in which he lived.*²⁶

Before her death in 1966, daughter Fanny B. Fletcher also cemented her legacy upon the form of the Fletcher Memorial Library, with the funding of a children's wing in 1964 that expanded the original footprint of the building and allowed the library to further its mission to educate and uplift the children of Ludlow and surrounding areas. From its 1901 opening, the library had held a notable juvenile collection for a library of its size, with the original book listings from 1901 including youth entries under religion, sociology, natural science, arts, literature, history, biography, and fiction; with titles from M.P.W. Smith's *Young and Old Puritans of Hatfield* to S.K. Bolton's *Lives of Girls Who Have Become Famous*. Through the first decades of the twentieth century local periodicals also referenced a steady stream of children's events and other elements geared toward younger users, both in the form of outreach and development of in-house collections.²⁷

By the mid-twentieth century, however, archival records indicate a growing desire to support more formalized youth programming, particularly as an augmentation to the area's school services, as detailed by a Fletcher Memorial Library librarian in an unpublished retrospective circa 1950 entitled, "Musings of an Unnamed Librarian." The archival document indicates both an increasingly complex suite of services to youth and underlying spatial stress, with the lofty expanse of the west reading room filled with children's stacks and a warren of basement shelves supplementing the library's initial stack rooms:

In the fifty years following opening we have increased the volumes from 8000 to over 19000 which would cause the Donor to say, "Beware of literary dyspepsia!" We have built 1116 feet of shelves in the basement on which to file magazines needed for reference and books like Crawford and James and Meredith books which today are not read but which will come back. We have built up collections of photographs, maps, and postcards. We have collected papers on local history. The large west reading room has been stacked and used for a children's room.

²⁶ "Allen M. Fletcher-The Citizen," *The Burlington Free Press*, May 24, 1922; "Ms. Fletcher, Ludlow, Cited by Trustees," *Rutland Daily Herald*, October 11, 1963.

²⁷ "Fletcher Memorial Library Classified List of Books Added from October 1, 1901 to October 1, 1902."

Unpublished Manuscript on file at the Fletcher Memorial Library: Fletcher Memorial Library and Fletcher Family Archival Documents.

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There are stacks of books in the east reading room. From the beginning we have worked with the schools, teaching classes how books are made, how they should be handled; explaining to students the card catalogue and the system of classification so they can find for themselves answers to questions. We send baskets of books into rural schools of Ludlow and the towns surrounding Ludlow. Each basket contains some 20 to 40 volumes which the school may keep for six weeks. The transportation of these books is cared for by the teachers. We have story hours to interest children in new books and in classics.²⁸

The Fletcher Memorial Library's concerted interest in children's and young adult programming in the mid-twentieth century coincided with broader societal interest across the state and country in juvenile-specific spaces and programs in libraries during the period. As early as 1924, St. Johnsbury's Athenaeum had added a dedicated children's wing to the original 1871 building, noting:

There is nowadays a greater circulation of all kinds of books from the Athenaeum than ever before. But in the children's department is felt the most pressing demand and most acute shortage. Why? Children read more easily than formerly. They learn earlier due to modern teaching methods. Books are being made immeasurably more attractive. The new children's wing at the library has proved a big stimulus.²⁹

The town of Springfield also added a children's wing in the 1930s, with Rutland developing a children's room in the same period, and a subsequent larger children's addition in 1966. Libraries across the state absorbed growing youth collections in existing buildings, dedicating children's rooms in libraries including the Rockingham Library; S. L. Griffith Memorial Library in Danby; the Fair Haven Library; Wallingford's Gilbert Hart Library; Pittsford's Maclure Library; and Northfield Library, where a portion of the reference room was "given over to the children." For its part, as detailed in the retrospective by the "unnamed librarian," Fletcher Memorial Library housed a growing number of children's stacks in the west reading room.³⁰

In the post-war period this pressure grew more marked, as an influx of children entered school age in the baby-boom years and a society grappled with largescale technological, social, and economic changes altering the childhood experience. Within this context, libraries were increasingly viewed as a critical lynchpin for childhood development, partner in a dance between parents, schools, and society, as detailed in the *Library Quarterly* of 1978:

²⁸ "History of Fletcher Memorial Library Tells of Achievement," *The Vermont Tribune*, October 26, 1954.

²⁹ "Help Children to Get Supply of Books," *St. Johnsbury Republican*, December 8, 1930.

³⁰ "Library on New Schedule," *The Springfield Reporter*, March 10, 1933; "Library," *Rutland Daily Herald*, August 29, 1967; "More Calls Made Yearly on Library," *The Bennington Evening Banner*, February 22, 1938' *Seventh Biennial Report of the Board of Library Commissioners of Vermont: 1907-1908*. (St. Johnsbury, Vermont: Press of the Caledonian Company, 1908).

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Research in early childhood education over the past two decades has provided a firm base on which to develop library services to the young child... Children's library services are now viewed as a community responsibility, with the public library entering into an active partnership with other agencies and institutions concerned with the child... Not all children who attend a program or use a service of the library are ready to engage in a literary experience and, indeed, may never be. But a variety of services and programs offered by the library can expose the child to the world of ideas, imagination, and creative expression. A single program, for example, can lead to a quest for information, can enrich the reading experience, or can be the experience. It is also an invitation to use the services of the library, and, as such, the library must consider the staff and resources necessary to encourage those ready to become users.³¹

This societal trend found ready voice in Vermont, long at the vanguard of library investment in the nation, with an unrivalled per capita library availability. In 1945, an influential pamphlet, "Vermont School Children Need More Library Service," made the case that libraries must extend and formalize their offerings to both students and pre-readers. Worried in a drop of library card ownership in students, and a growing gulf between the schools and the library, an influential array of library policy-makers in the state advocated for a strengthening and diversification of youth involvement. The staff and Trustees of Fletcher Memorial Library were observant of this trend, as elaborated in an early 1950s public lecture on the affairs of the library:³²

I have been asked to talk about the library and the community. The first thing one should realize is that the library is an educational institution. Of course it is also used for recreation as well. The library supplements the schools and that is especially true in Ludlow. Each afternoon from 3 to 33 junior and high school students come to the library during school hours. They are doing reference work, getting book reports or other things pertaining to their school work. These students are mostly ones from outside the village. As you see our library has to serve both as a town library and as a school library. In the evening during the five school days there are from 5 to 30 students in each night to use the library. I mean to use it and not to fool either. With all the people using the library I cannot allow the students to make too much noise as no one would be able to get any work done. I believe they have learned this. When I say no more noise or else you will leave they know I mean what I say. At times they are studying together and forget themselves... So you see, here in Ludlow we are fortunate to have a beautiful building, the funds to keep it in good running shape, and a trained person to find things for you... It is seldom that a town has such a worthwhile memorial given to it.

³¹ Mae Benne. "Educational and Recreational Services of the Public Library for Children," *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy*, (Volume 48, No. 4, 1978).

³² Ms. Moody Coauthors Second Booklet on School Libraries," *The Springfield Reporter*, June 6, 1951.

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Within this context, by 1963 the Fletcher Memorial Library had announced an expansion to add a dedicated “Children’s Wing,” with the project “instigated” by Fanny Fletcher. As described in *The Rutland Daily Herald*, the project:

*Added to the main part of the library a 25 x 25-foot room extending to the west of the present structure, including a children’s library, restrooms, and a basement room for development as well as a children’s librarian added to the staff.*³³

The project was the first major alteration to the original design of the building, with earlier work limited to augmentation of some original heating systems and miscellaneous repainting and repair of interior elements. Woodstock, Vermont Architect Charles Hood Helmer (1906-1983) designed the addition, in a subservient style that adapted the overall materials and composition of the original building into a restrained and understated echoing form. Helmer had attended University of Pennsylvania and received his Bachelor of Arts in Architecture, working as a United States Postal Service architect during the lean Depression years from 1934 to 1938 then enlisting in the Civil Engineer Corps of the Navy during World War II. By the late 1940s he was in private practice, first in Chelsea and subsequently in Woodstock, initially engaged in the partnership of Helmer and Cole and then working independently under the firm of Charles Hood Helmer and Associates through his death in 1983.³⁴

The long post-war span of Helmer’s career is reflective of Vermont’s defining economic and demographic growth in the post-war period, with a wide arc of bank, school, and wide-spanning public commissions in generally modern and restrained commercial styles. Helmer’s portfolio spanned a myriad of bank buildings and renovations, including but not limited to a Peoples National Bank Branch in Barre (1957), Proctor Trust Company in Proctor (1961), Northfield Savings Bank in Northfield (1972), Marble Savings Bank in Woodstock (1979), Burlington Savings Bank in Brattleboro (1980), and a Northfield Savings Bank Branch in Montpelier (1980). Both in the partnership of Helmer and Cole and independently Helmer was commissioned for a number of schools, including but not limited to the Tunbridge, Bethel, Bennington, and Addison Schools through the 1950s and Salisbury Village School (1976), reflecting concerted state interest and funding for modernization of school facilities across the state. In addition to this work, Helmer was associated with an array of public commissions, including a Central Vermont Public Service Corporation Building in Ascutney (1965); recreational and pavilion facilities in Woodstock at Vail Fields (1977), and several “Welcome and Information Centers” on the newly-built Interstate 91 highway system (1966), lauded as a vanguard representation of tourist facilities for a tourist-conscious post-war Vermont. Helmer has also been credited with residential commissions, with a West Windsor low-slung Ranch style commission featuring prominent timberwork and wood stylings (1974).³⁵

³³ “Miss Fletcher, Ludlow, Cited by Trustees,” *Rutland Daily Herald*, October 1, 1963.

³⁴ “Charles Hood Helmer,” *The Burlington Free Press*, September 28, 1983

³⁵ “Ludlow Notes,” *Rutland Daily Herald*, March 4, 1940; “Peoples National Bank of Barre,” *The Barre Daily Times*, December 4, 1957; “Charles Hood Helmer,” *The Burlington Free Press*, September 28, 1983; “C.H. Helmer, Architect, Opens Woodstock Office,” *Rutland Daily Herald*, August 16, 1960; “Information Center Due,” *Rutland Daily Herald*, May 30, 1966; “Proctor Trust Company,” *Rutland Daily Herald*, October 11, 1961; “Northfield Bank

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Within this broad mid-century context, Helmer's development of the children's wing was reflective of an adept programmatic and stylistic versatility, with the clean lines and material form of the addition a clear and unassuming expansion of the existing stylistic anchor. With arched windows that replicated, but did not compete with, that of the original; a pragmatic application of simplistic interior features including vinyl tile, CMU walls, and unembellished forms; and a recessed site placement, the children's wing was an effective and functional expansion, with no allusions meant to overpower or alter the building's existing stylistic identity. The wing was dedicated on June 28th, 1964, with Ms. Fletcher the honorary guest along with Board of Trustees President Thornton Burnet acting as Master of Ceremonies, and Harry Miele, the new Children's Librarian. As observed by Fanny Fletcher in the ceremonies, it was her hope that the "final ingredient of a good children's library is a spot that can light a spark of life and lead to juvenile research and subsequently to a lifetime of rewarding reading."³⁶

The opening of the children's wing appears to have fostered an expansion in active programming, with both the addition providing programming space and newly freed core areas repurposed from their congested stack-filled status. By 1965, the library announced the opening of a fine arts room, assumed to be in the basement, "to be used for cultural programs for courses." In 1966, the library announced that, "art lessons were underway at the library, with 95 students receiving art lessons each week from Mrs. Virginia Newhall of Weston, who is also the Art Supervisor of the Springfield School System." By the mid-1970s the Fletcher Memorial Library held 40,000 volumes and boasted 2338 patrons, overseen by a long-time head librarian, Mrs. Francis (Connie) Bixby, who had been at the helm of the institution for 22 years. As opined in local periodical *The Message* at the 75th anniversary of the library in 1976, "The Fletcher Memorial Library: long may it stand, a monument of good and generous purpose"³⁷

Comparative Analysis: Libraries in Vermont

As detailed in the context, free public libraries are an enduring civic and architectural expression across towns and village of Vermont, from the highest-style monumental form of libraries like St. Johnsbury's Athenaeum, Burlington's Fletcher Free Library, Randolph's Kimball Public Library, Montpelier's Kellogg Hubbard Library, and Bradford's Public Library, to simpler forms like that of the Alden Balch Memorial Library in Lunenburg, Leach Public Library in Irasburg, Concord's Public Library, Calef Memorial Library in Washington, and others representing the state's nearly 200 library buildings. In addition to an array of purpose-built structures, the state's libraries have been housed in an array of repurposed buildings, from the Orwell Free Library

is Expanding," *The Burlington Free Press*, August 11, 1972; "Business and Financial," *Rutland Daily Herald*, June 10, 1979; "Gerald E. Morrissey Submits Low Bid," *The Bennington Banner*, November 23, 1955; "Architects Meet with Rural School Group Tonight," *The Bennington Evening Banner*, April 9, 1954; "Bethel's New School Building Ready for Use in September," *The Barre Daily Times*, May 27, 1958; "Welcome Center Opens on Interstate 91," *The Burlington Free Press*, September 25, 1966; "255 Delano Road, West Windsor, Vermont," Williamson Group Sothebys International Realty, accessed April 8, 2024 at <https://www.vermontcountryrealestate.com/listing/4798734/255-delano-road-west-windsor-vt-05037/>.

³⁶ "A Lasting Tribute to the Memory of a Beloved Father," *The Message*, January 21, 1975.

³⁷ "A Lasting Tribute to the Memory of a Beloved Father," *The Message*, January 21, 1975; Fletcher Memorial Library," *Rutland Daily Herald*, November 8, 1965; "Art Lessons Underway at Fletcher Memorial Library," *Rutland Daily Herald*, July 19, 1966.

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located in an Italianate former residence, to the McIndoes Falls Public Library, located in an 1853 former-Academy building anchored by a full height classical portico. As a property type, the library in Vermont is indicative of remarkable social cohesion, with towns and villages across the state holding libraries as central components of their civic development; and immense variation, with a wide range of physical expressions that are reflective of distinct strands of development and local contexts. A number of these libraries are listed in the NRHP either individually or within their district settings for their significance in expressing this historical development pattern.³⁸

Within this well-established and socially and architecturally important context, the Fletcher Memorial Library is expressive of significant strands of development, with both its Renaissance Revival architectural form and civic development narrative expressive of important stands of community development within Ludlow and its surrounding communities. Development of the library was an important local manifestation of a salient and far-reaching set of ideals placing education and the embrace of knowledge as central to the civic idea, with the physical development of the building an expression of the interrelationship between architecture and civic ideals for engagement. As declared in the 1901 dedication of the building by benefactor and one-time Vermont Governor Allen Fletcher, “I, on my own part, wish to say I hope this library may be of service to you, that you may find pleasure both in the building and in the books.” In the library’s 123rd year of community operation, this dual mandate has continued to find voice, with the Fletcher Memorial Library an educational and architectural foundation for Ludlow and its environs.

Application of the National Register of Historic Places Criteria

Criterion A: Education

The Fletcher Memorial Library is significant under Criterion A at the local level of significance for its strong associations with the development of the Free Library Movement in Ludlow, Vermont. The property meets the registration requirements for individual eligibility for its intimate association with the growth of public libraries in Vermont in the late nineteenth and twentieth century, with a period of significance marking the construction and dedication of the building in 1901 through 1964, when the library was expanded with a dedicated Children’s Addition. The donation and endowment of the library by patron Allen M. Fletcher in memory of his father Stoughton A. Fletcher is a locally important reflection of statewide and national strands of development that placed the free library as a cornerstone of rural and urban civic development, with establishment of robust public libraries seen as a key vehicle for moral,

³⁸ See Vermont Division for Historic Preservation Online Resource Center: Belcher Memorial Library (National Register Reference # 78000252); Hartford Library (National Register Reference #94001447); H.H. Baxter Memorial Library (Rutland Jewish Center) (National Register Reference # 78000239); Goodrich Memorial Library (National Register Reference # 83004228); Haskell Free Library and Opera House (National Register Reference # 76000143); Peabody Library (National Register Reference # 84003466); Kimball Public Library (National Register Reference # 85000568); Alice M. Ward Memorial Library (National Register Reference # 80000332); Fletcher Free Library Carnegie Building (National Register Reference # 76000138); Cotton Free Library (National Register Reference # 96000388); Abbott Memorial Library (National Register Reference # 14001141); Aldrich Public Library (National Register Reference # 15000961).

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social, and economic uplift. Through the twentieth century the Fletcher Memorial Library has continued to evolve and advance within this overarching contextual framework, with expansion of both the program and physical footprint of the building, most substantially in 1964 with the placement of a children's wing and in 2004 with development of accessible access infrastructure. Through this evolution, the Fletcher Memorial Library remains as a cogent reflection of the centrality and dynamism of the public library in community life in Vermont and as such bears significance under NRHP Criterion A.

Criterion C: Architecture

The Fletcher Memorial Library is significant under NRHP Criterion C at the local level of significance for its expressive Renaissance Revival design. Constructed in 1901 in the style of the "Later English Renaissance," the compact brick building expresses a cohesive and heightened design, at once deferring to the surrounding small-scale village context of Ludlow and imbuing the village streetscape with a sophisticated revival form. With an exterior form characterized by a symmetrical simplicity, with granite foundation walls, red brick massing, and limestone ornamentation, the Fletcher Memorial Library conveys a refined yet understated identity, heightened by key allusions including festoons, a Fletcher coat of arms, and a classically-inspired anchoring temple-like entry. The interior of the building expresses a rich layering of materials and functional spaces, with marble and wood paneling, dynamic floor and ceiling mosaics, intricate stone fireplace mantels, and lofty arched ceilings creating a heightened composition. As an expression of the early twentieth century free library, the interior spaces of the Fletcher Memorial library are a significant representative of library design, with a clearly demarcated receiving room, reading room, and stacks framing an array of original features including reading tables and chairs, lighting, and artwork. While the library has been expanded over time, first in 1964 with the placement of a subservient children's wing and again in 2004 with accessible entry additions, the alterations are such that they have not undermined either the architectural or programmatic integrity of the building, with the original 1901 design intact and readily discerned as a distinct and significant library composition. Further, as a significant physical representative of the advancement of children's programming in Ludlow's community life, the 1964 Children's Wing reflects important ongoing strands in the Library's physical and operational development.

Character Defining Features

The Fletcher Memorial Library retains a number of key physical characteristics that allow the building to convey its essential physical and operational form as an early twentieth century free public library. These features are considered character defining and allow the property to convey significance within its historic context for development and period of significance.

- *Placement and Orientation on Main Street fronting Veteran's Memorial Park:*
Constructed on a small .67 acre lot fronting Veteran's Memorial Park in the center of the Village of Ludlow, the Fletcher Memorial Library was envisioned by benefactor Allen M. Fletcher and architect S.F. Page to be a central fulcrum for the civic development of the community, acting in concert with the Black River Academy and Ludlow's religious

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and economic drivers to sustain a robust village life. This location and community orientation is a key character defining element of the library. Within this context, the generally open grass lot surrounding the property on its street-fronting side is character defining, allowing the building ample exposure to surrounding village. The paved parking area at the rear of the lot is not character defining, as it has evolved through time in expression of evolving functional and infrastructural mandates.

- *Formal Renaissance Revival Design and Ornamentation:* The expressive Renaissance Revival Design is character defining, including the building's 1901 massing, plan, materials, fenestration, layered exterior and interior architectural allusions that include exterior limestone detailing and interior marble, wood, limestone, and plaster ornamentation. Within this stylistic context, all original 1901 materials are character defining in both the exterior and interior of the property, as all contribute to the significant architectural form and composition of the property.
- *Interior Layout and Plan Devoted to Free Public Library Functions:* As designed in 1901, the functional plan of the library was a clear and expressive composition dedicated to library functions, with this overall plan remaining intact and characterized by high integrity. Within this context, the entry vestibule, receiving room, east and west reading rooms, receiving counter, stacks, and librarian's room are all character defining. In addition, original furnishings including reading desks and chairs, lamps, artwork, and other commemorative plaques and panels are all character defining. While the materials employed in the basement, including concrete floors, stone foundation walls, areas of barrel vault ceilings underlaying the first floor, are all character defining, the functional program of the basement is not considered character defining, as it has evolved and expanded over time from a secondary, non-public orientation to an expanded and modified public-facing functional identity.
- *The Compatible and Subserving 1964 Children's Wing Addition:* This section of the building is considered a character defining element that is reflective of the library's physical evolution to accommodate changing mandates in youth services. The addition was a functional and programmatic succession to the significant formation of the library in 1901, and is clearly demarcated by a pared down and minimalistic physical form. This clearly differentiated physical space, conveyed by minimalistic use of brick, compatible stylistic allusions including arched windows, and simple and practical interior materials including concrete block and tile present a significant strand of the building's development over time.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Books

Belding, Patricia W. *Where the Books Are: History and Architecture of Vermont's Public Libraries with Photos and Anecdotes*. Barre, Vermont: Potash Brook Publishing, 1996.

Cutter, William Richard. *New England Families: Genealogical and Memorial*. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1914.

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Wiegand, Wayne A. *Part of our Lives: A People's History of the American Public Library*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Newspapers, Journals, Periodicals

Backbay Houses (online material)

The Barre Daily Times

The Bennington Evening Banner

The Burlington Free Press

Benne, Mae. "Educational and Recreational Services of the Public Library for Children," *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy*, Volume 48, No. 4, 1978.

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Ditzion, Sydney. "Social Reform, Education, and the Library, 1850-1900," *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy*, Volume 9, No. 2, 1939.

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The Indianapolis Times

The Message

Mickelson, Peter. "American Society and the Public Library in the Thought of Andrew Carnegie," *The Journal of Library History*, Volume 10, No. 2, 1975.

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The Rutland Daily Herald

The St. Johnsbury Republican

The Springfield Reporter

The Vermont Journal

The Vermont Tribune

Unpublished Materials / Collections

Collections of the Fletcher Memorial Library

Vermont Division for Historic Preservation Online Resource Center

National Register of Historic Places listings in the National Archives Records Administration (NARA)

S. F. Page (Fehmer and Page). Blueprints for the Fletcher Memorial Library. On file at the Fletcher Memorial Library.

Charles Hood Helmer and Associates. Plans for the Children's Wing Addition to the Fletcher Memorial Library, 1962. On file at the Fletcher Memorial Library.

Oral Interviews

Oral Interview with Author, June 2, 2024: Fletcher Memorial Library Director Jill Tofferi

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Fletcher Memorial Library

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Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): Listed on the Vermont State Register, September 21, 1977, Ludlow Survey 1410-13.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .67 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 43.39671° Longitude: -72.69449°

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The NRHP Resource Boundary includes the entirety of the legal parcel that the Fletcher Memorial Library occupies, SPAN 363-112-10953. The Boundary includes the significant resource as well as the associated framing lot that characterized the property during its period of significance. The Boundary and geographic information are included in accompanying mapping.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The Boundary includes the significant resource as well as its historically associated surrounding site to interpret the architectural and community associations that qualify the property for listing in the NRHP.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Polly Seddon Allen
organization: Consulting Architectural Historian
street & number: PO Box 215
city or town: Craftsbury Common state: VT zip code: 05827
e-mail polly.s.allen@gmail.com
telephone: 916.201.1855
date: 4/19/2024

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Fletcher Memorial Library

City or Vicinity: Ludlow

County: Windsor State: Vermont

Photographer: Polly Seddon Allen

Date Photographed: 2/20/2024 and 6/2/2024

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 43. Overview of Fletcher Memorial Library, facing southwest from Main Street.
- 2 of 43. Overview of Fletcher Memorial Library, facing south from Veteran's Memorial Park.
- 3 of 43. Contextual street frontage of Fletcher Memorial Library, facing west.
- 4 of 43. Overview of Fletcher Memorial Library, facing southeast from Main Street.

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- 5 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, Main Street front entrance.
- 6 of 43. East side of Fletcher Memorial Library, East Reading Room within.
- 7 of 43. East side of Fletcher Memorial Library, stacks within. Note the more modest design order of this secondary section of building off of the Main Street frontage.
- 8 of 43. Rear, south, side of Fletcher Memorial Library, from parking lot.
- 9 of 43. Overview of Fletcher Memorial Library, facing northeast from parking lot to secondary back wall. Note 1964 Children's Wing Addition at west, and 2004 accessibility entrance.
- 10 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, facing east with 1964 addition in foreground.
- 11 of 43. Interior of Fletcher Memorial Library, facing north toward entry vestibule from Receiving Room.
- 12 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, barrel arched tile mosaic ceiling in vestibule, with framing pilasters and rounded marble wall visible.
- 13 of 43. Marble and wrought iron stairs descending from vestibule to basement of library, note curved marble panel wall.
- 14 of 43. Interior of Fletcher Memorial Library, facing from West Reading Room through Receiving Room toward East Reading Room.
- 15 of 43. Interior of Fletcher Memorial Library, facing from West Reading Room through Receiving Room toward East Reading Room, circulation desk at right in Receiving Room.
- 16 of 43. Patron checking book out at Fletcher Memorial Library at Proctor marble circulation desk.
- 17 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, detail of tile mosaic floor.
- 18 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, East Reading Room. Note fireplace with Fletcher Family Coat of Arms.
- 19 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, detail of fireplace in East Reading Room with Fletcher Family Coat of Arms.
- 20 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, West Reading Room.
- 21 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, detail of West Reading Room fireplace with Vermont State Seal, "Freedom and Unity."
- 22 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, facing south from West Reading Room through stacks.
- 23 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, facing south along east wall through stacks.
- 24 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, a nook in the stacks.

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- 25 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, circulation desk with original drawers and marble counter.
- 26 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, West Reading Room clock and wood paneling.
- 27 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, woodwork and plaster detail, West Reading Room.
- 28 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, plaster and marble detail, Receiving Room.
- 29 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, card catalogue in East Reading Room with portrait of Allen Fletcher above.
- 30 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, detail of Fletcher Coat of Arms in East Reading Room.
- 31 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, Librarian's Room, located off west side of stacks.
- 32 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, original exterior wall off of Librarian's Room, enclosed in 1964 with Children's Wing Addition.
- 33 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, hall connecting original building with 1964 Children's Wing. Note original brick exterior wall of main building, enclosed.
- 34 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, overview of 1964 Children's Wing.
- 35 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, basement activity room added as part of 1964 Children's Wing.
- 36 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, basement looking at original footing and foundation walls, enclosed as part of 1964 addition.
- 37 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, basement space under original portion of building, now used as meeting space.
- 38 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, basement space under original portion of building, note barrel vaulted brick ceiling on railroad ties.
- 39 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, basement space under original portion of building, now used as history room and meeting space, with early collections.
- 40 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, detail of railroad tie as structural tie "Ludlow, Vermont."
- 41 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, bound copies of local periodicals from early collection holdings, in basement.
- 42 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, nineteenth and early twentieth century collection of *Atlantic Monthly*.
- 43 of 43. Fletcher Memorial Library, Dedication Plaque to Stoughton A. Fletcher from Allen M. Fletcher, located in entry vestibule on curved marble wall.

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ADDITIONAL ITEMS

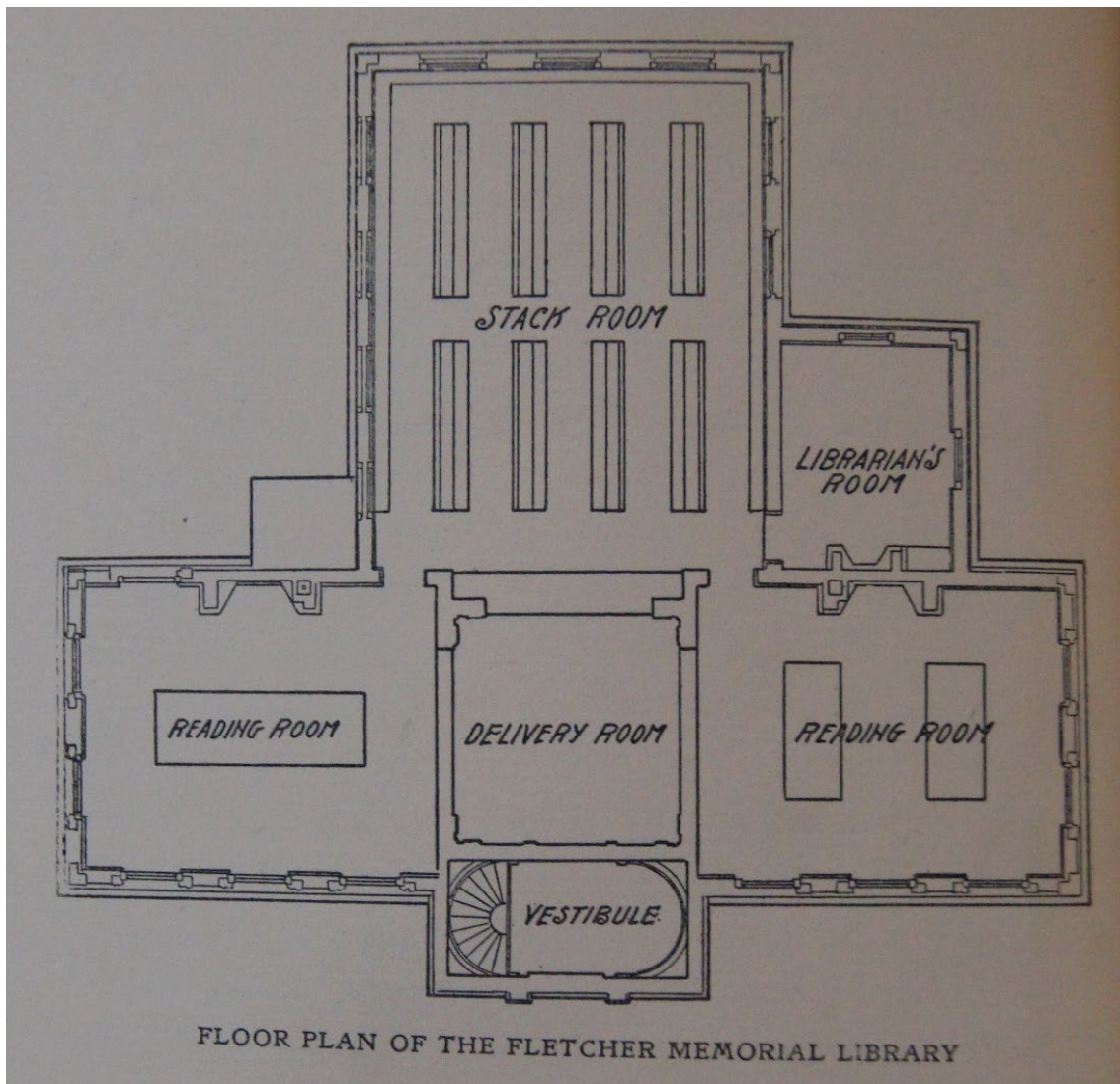


Figure 1: Plan of the 1901 Fletcher Memorial Library, as presented in the library's Dedication Booklet (Collection of the Fletcher Memorial Library).

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Figure 2: Blueprint detail of Fletcher Memorial Library Vestibule, S. F. Page Architect (Collection of the Fletcher Memorial Library).

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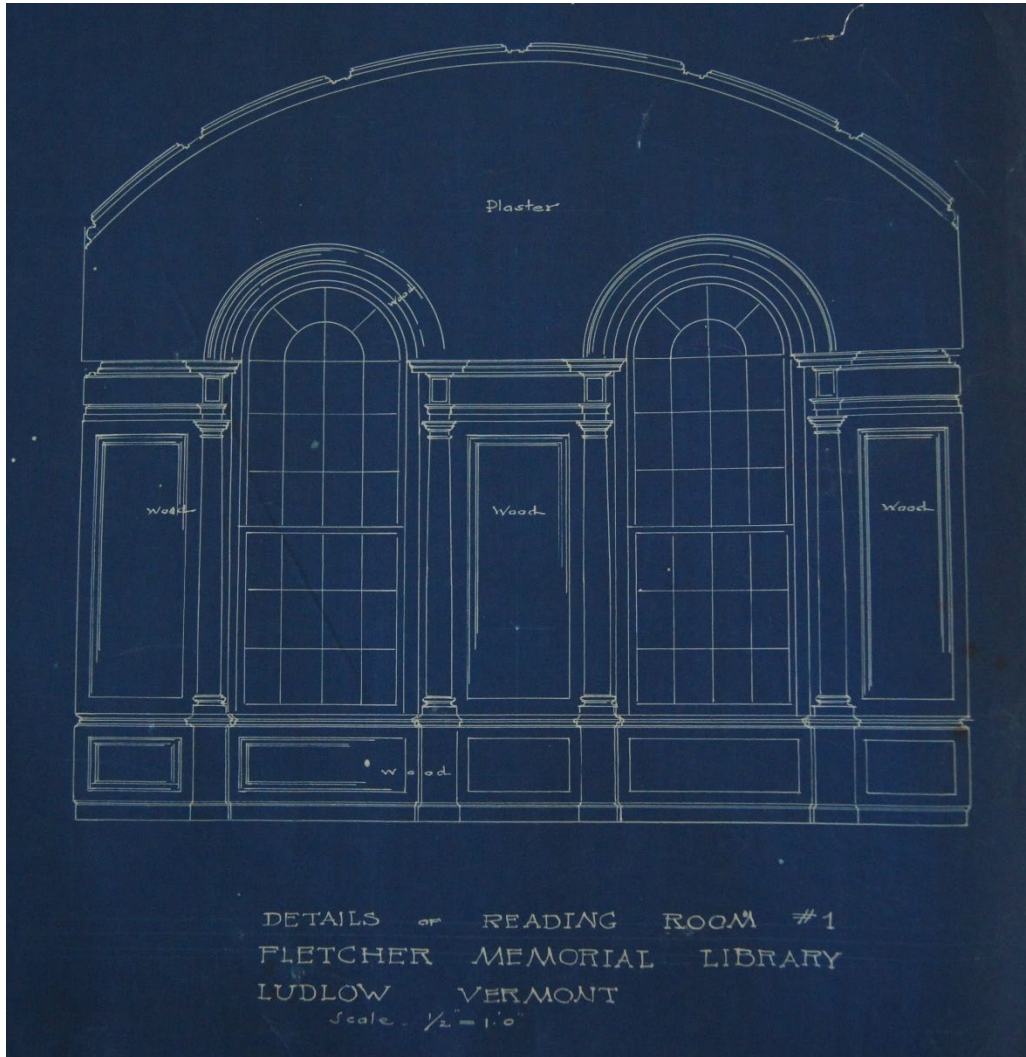


Figure 3: Blueprint detail of Fletcher Memorial Library Reading Room, S. F. Page Architect (Collection of the Fletcher Memorial Library).

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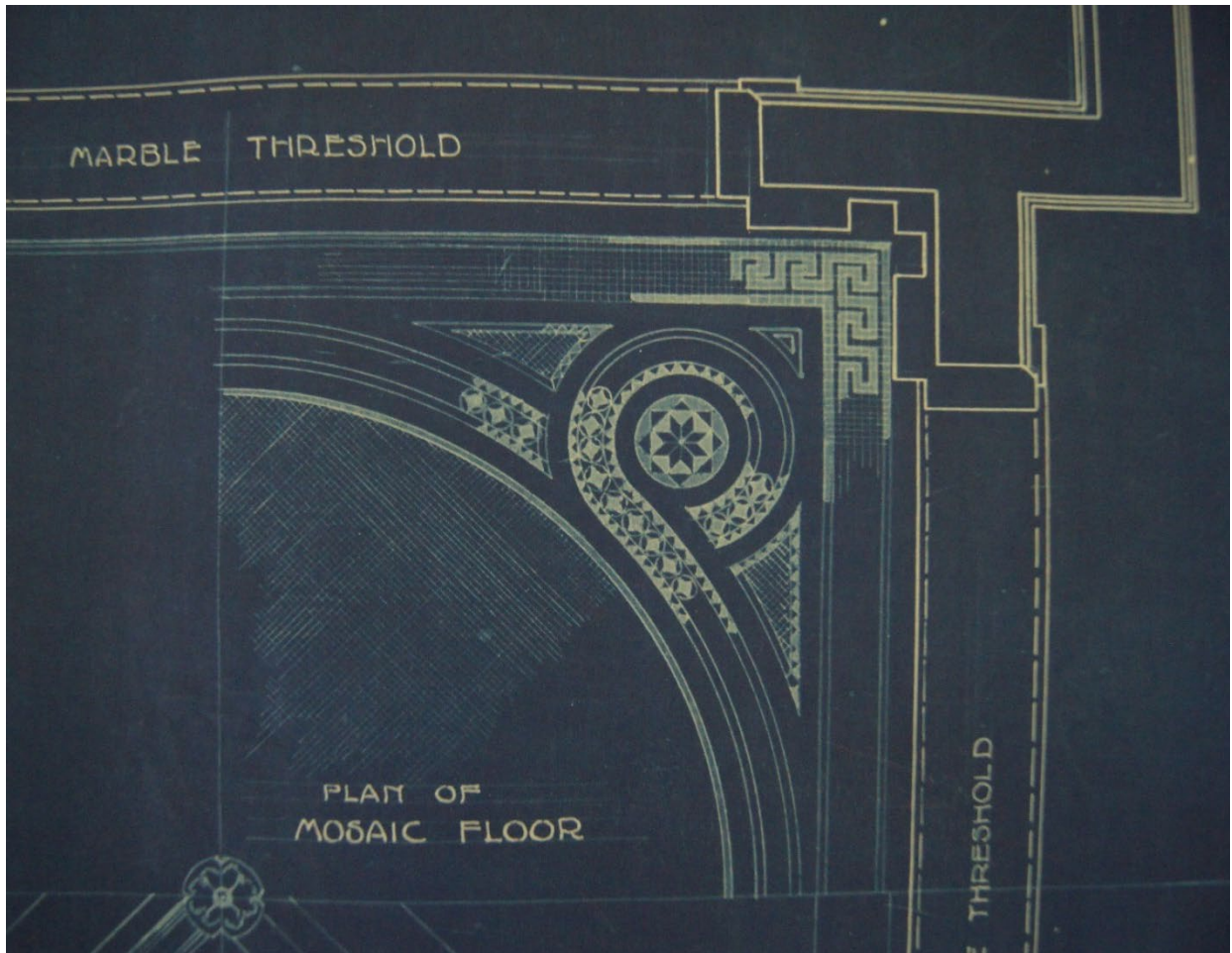


Figure 4: Blueprint detail of Fletcher Memorial Library Floor Mosaic, S. F. Page Architect (Collection of the Fletcher Memorial Library).

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Figure 5: Fletcher Memorial Library, circa 1901
(Collection of the Fletcher Memorial Library).

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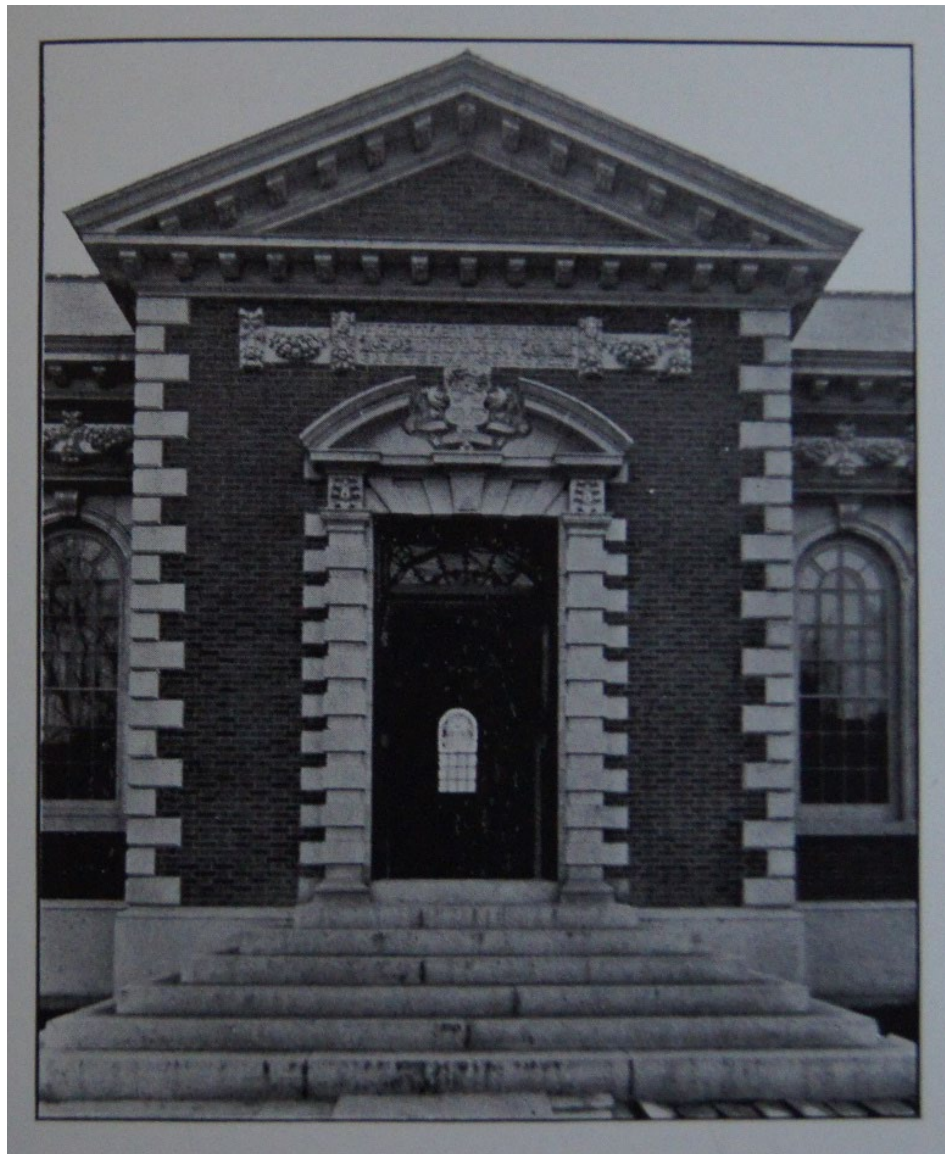


Figure 6: Fletcher Memorial Library, circa 1901
(Collection of the Fletcher Memorial Library).

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Figure 7: Fletcher Memorial Library, circa 1901
(Collection of the Fletcher Memorial Library).

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Figure 8: Fletcher Memorial Library, circa 1901
(Collection of the Fletcher Memorial Library).

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Figure 9: Fletcher Memorial Library, circa 1901
(Collection of the Fletcher Memorial Library).

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Figure 10: Detail of the East Reading Room and Fletcher Coat of Arms, n.d.
(Collection of the Fletcher Memorial Library).

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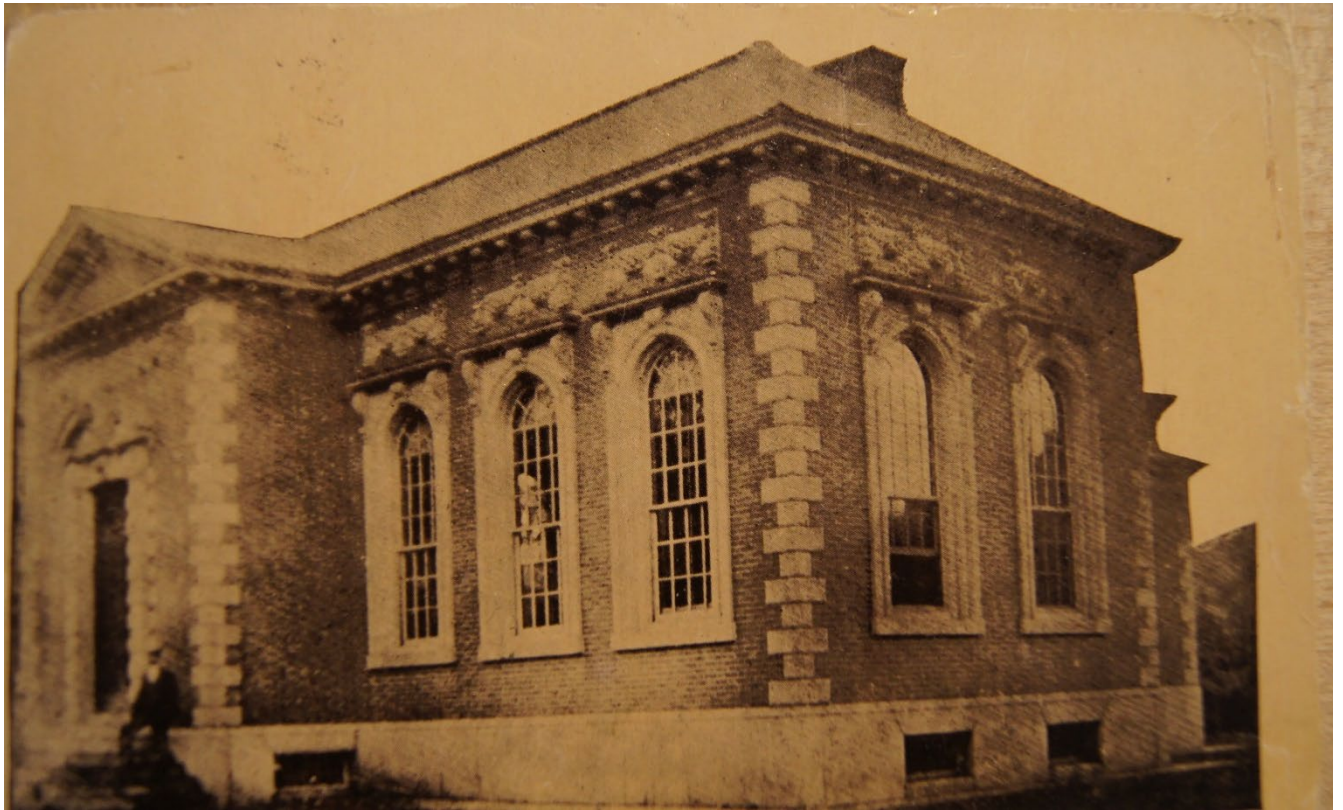


Figure 11: Fletcher Memorial Library, looking southwest, n.d. Note figure sitting on steps.
(Collection of the Fletcher Memorial Library).

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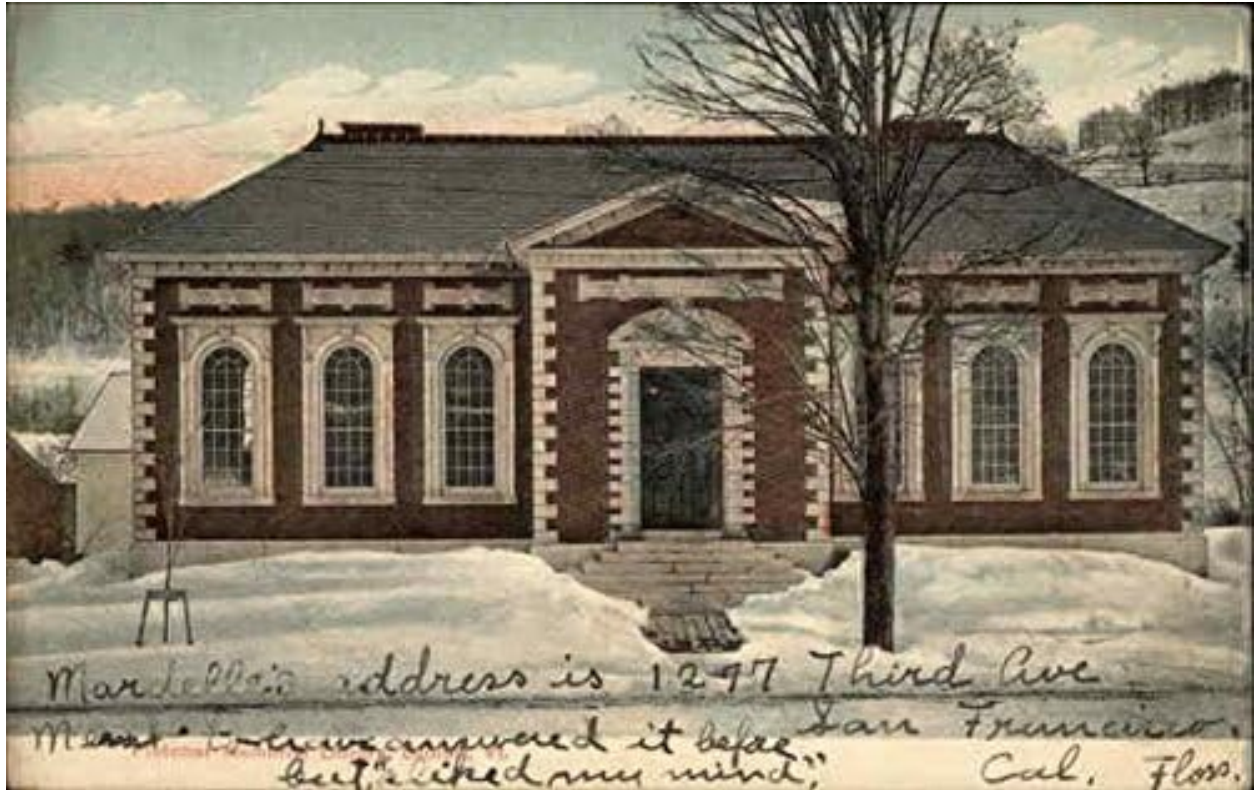


Figure 12: Postcard, Fletcher Memorial Library in Winter, n.d.
(Collection of the Fletcher Memorial Library).

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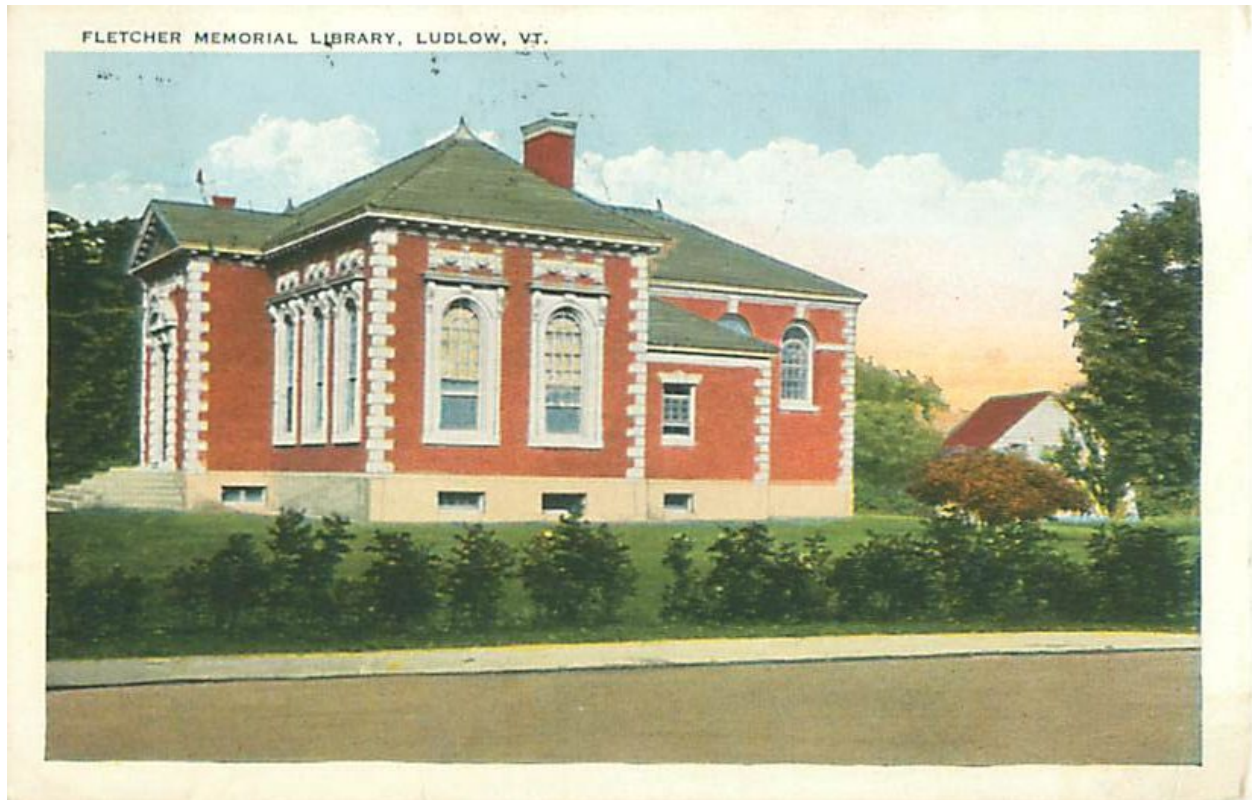


Figure 13: Postcard, Fletcher Memorial Library in Summer, n.d.
(Collection of the Fletcher Memorial Library).

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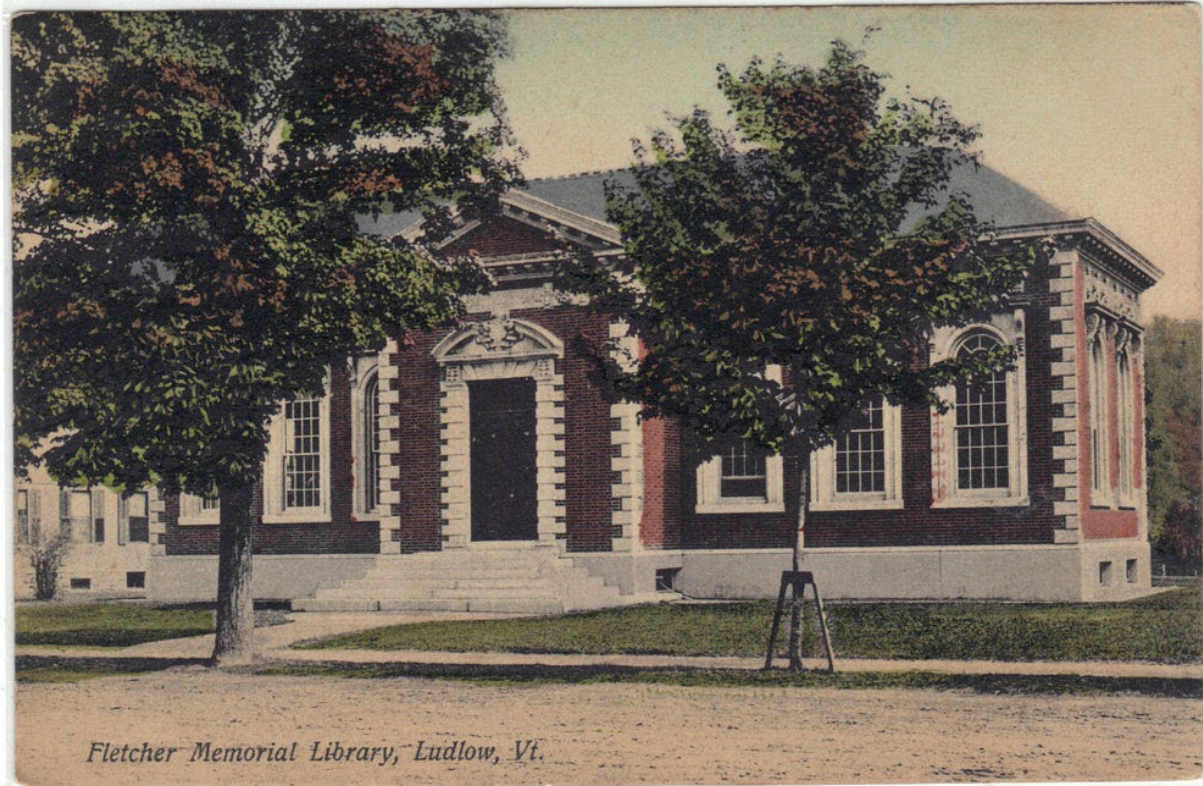


Figure 14: Postcard, Fletcher Memorial Library in Summer, n.d.
(Collection of the Fletcher Memorial Library).

Fletcher Memorial Library
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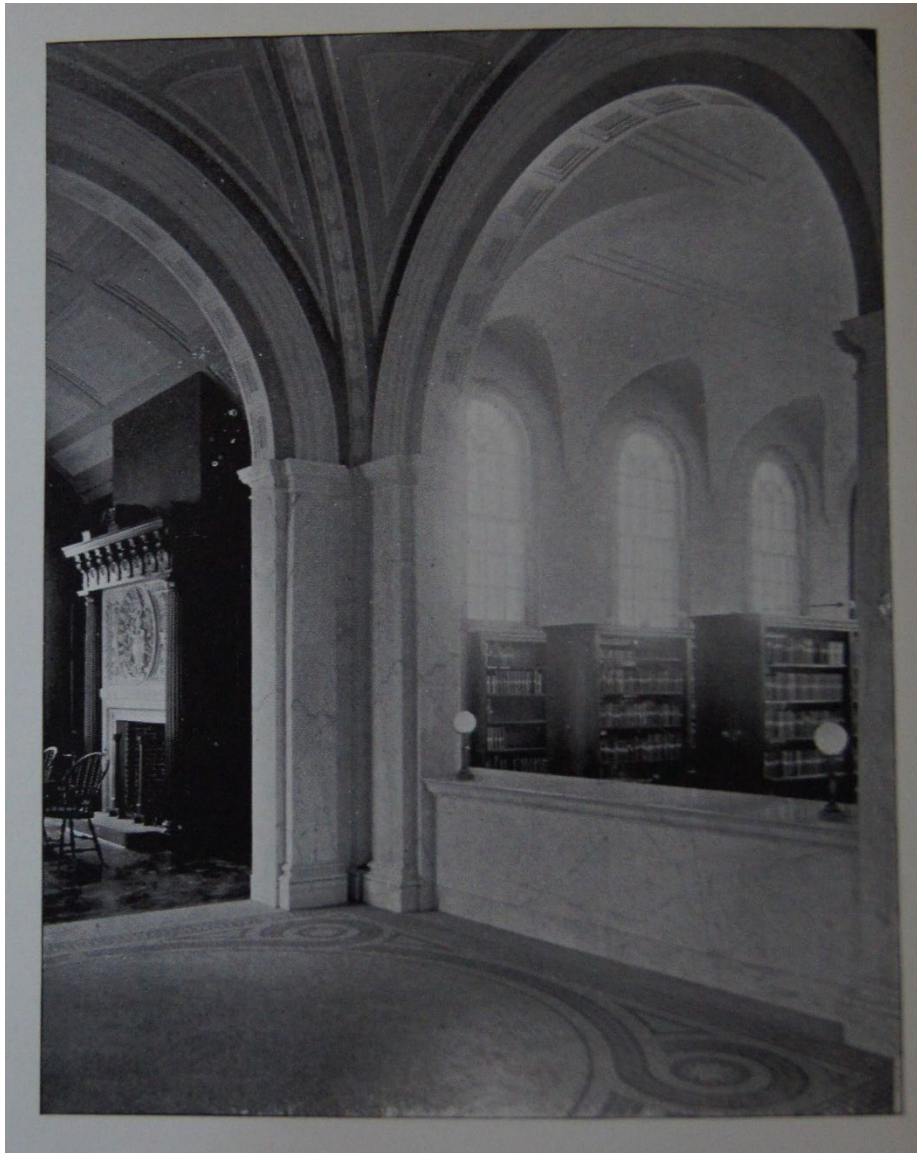


Figure 15: Fletcher Memorial Library Receiving Room looking toward East Reading Room,
1901
(Collection of the Fletcher Memorial Library).

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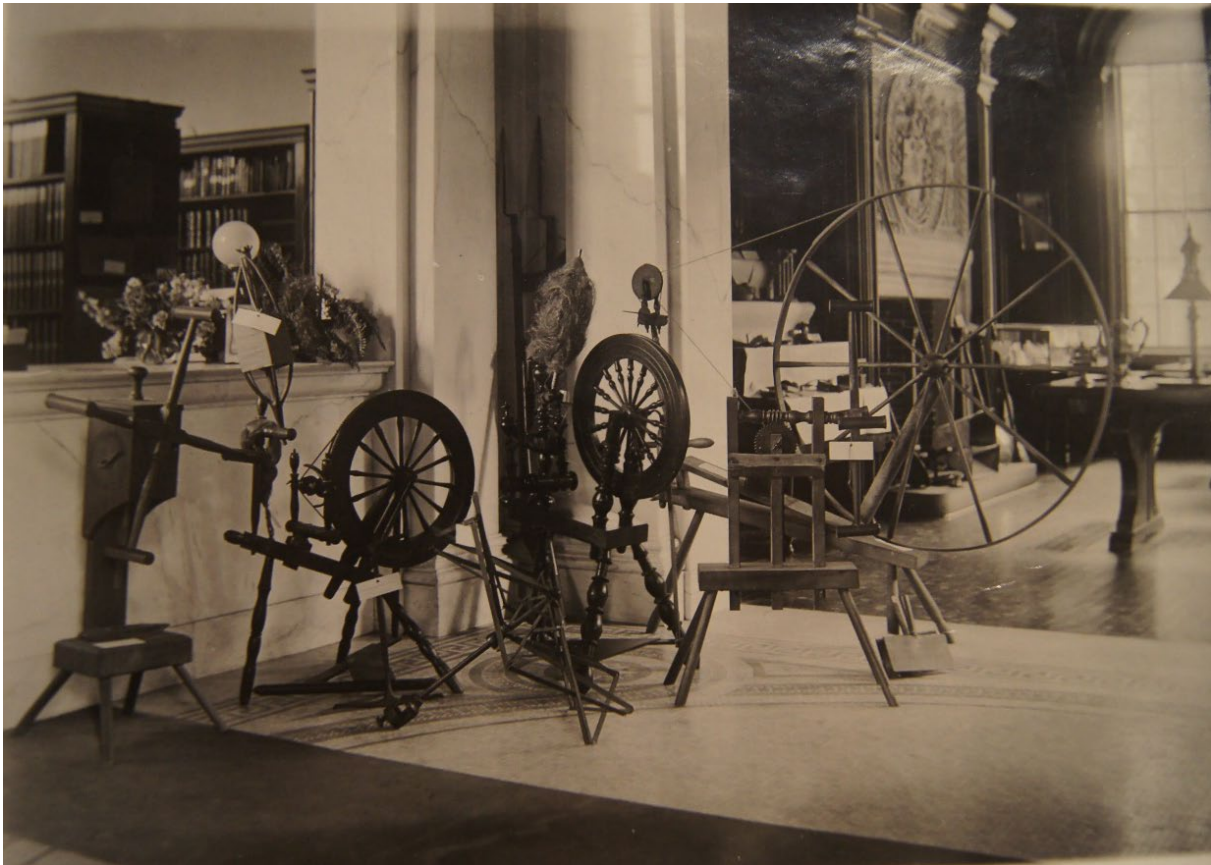


Figure 16: Collection of Spinning Wheels on Display in Receiving Room of Fletcher Memorial Library (n.d.).
(Collection of the Fletcher Memorial Library)

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Figure 17: Fletcher Memorial Library Reading Room, n.d.
(Collection of the Fletcher Memorial Library)

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Figure 18: China and silver display in the Reading Room of Fletcher Memorial Library, n.d.
(Collection of the Fletcher Memorial Library)

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FLETCHER MEMORIAL LIBRARY
 LUDLOW, VERMONT

Classified list of books added from October 1st,
 1901, to October 1st, 1902

GENERAL WORKS

Atlantic monthly v.87-88 1901	051	At1
Bulletin of the Salem Public Library 4v. 1895-1901	017	Sa3
Century magazine v.61-62 1901	051	C33
Harper's new monthly magazine v.97-103 1898-1901	051	H23
Larned, J.N. Literature of American history	q016.97	L32-R
North American review v.172-173 1901	051	N81
Saint Nicholas v.26-28 1897-1901	051	Sa2
Scott Postage stamp catalog 2v. 1901-1902 (gift)	017	Sco8
Scribner's magazine v.29-30 1901	051	Scr7
Wisconsin historical society library building memorial volume (gift)	q 026.9	W75-R

PHILOSOPHY

Addams, Jane Democracy and social ethics	170	Ad3d
---	-----	------

Figure 19: Classified List of Books Added to the Fletcher Memorial Library, 1902.
 (Collection of the Fletcher Memorial Library)

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New Books
JUVENILE

Angus and the ducks, by Flack.
An adorable picture book about a puppy.

Miki, by the Petershams. "This is a gorgeous Petersham book. Children will adore its glowing color and will be made to love Miki's country, Hungary."

Wind on the Prairie, by Webber. "Into the lives of Mary and Emerson, on a Colorado sheep ranch, comes a series of terrifying mysteries."

The Little Duke, by Yonge. "Richard the Fearless became Duke of Normandy when he was eight years old. The story tells of the perils of his childhood and of his activity at the Court of France. After much adventure, hardship, struggle, Richard returns home to rule his country wisely and well."

Knickerbocker's history of New York, by Washington Irving, edited by Anne Carroll Moore and illustrated by James Daugherty is an amusing satire on the Dutch founders of New York, carefully edited to include the most entertaining parts of Irving's work.

Figure 20: "New Books Added to the Fletcher Memorial Library,"
Vermont Tribune, December 24, 1930.

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"The Fletcher Memorial Library has sent baskets of books to rural schools around Ludlow and to the village school, and for some time it has given instruction in the use of the library to the 7th and 9th grades, but in 1949 and 1950 it increased its relations with the school considerably." A report is listed of the grades visiting the library, the number who learned to find books, how to take books out, how books are arranged on the shelves, learned why it is necessary to put books back on the shelves in the right place, learned how to use the catalog, how to locate from the call number on the catalog card, received permission to use the library for school work, and other activities. Circulation of 20984 was listed for 1949 and 22836 for 1950, an increase of 1852.

Mrs. Gladding, librarian wrote, "All these things have been possible because of the cooperation between the teachers and the librarian. It would not be possible if the teachers did not do their share."

Figure 21: Rural school program of the Fletcher Memorial Library, indicative of the growing mid-twentieth century emphasis on children and young adults and educational opportunities for library involvement.

Springfield Reporter, June 6, 1951.

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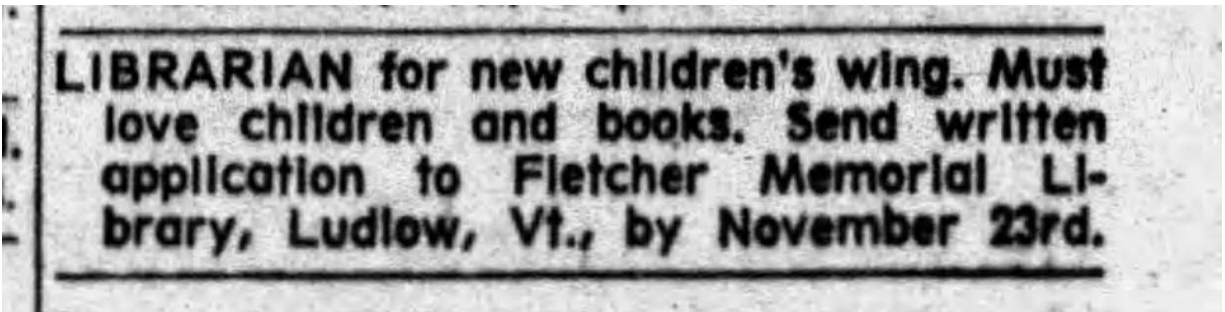
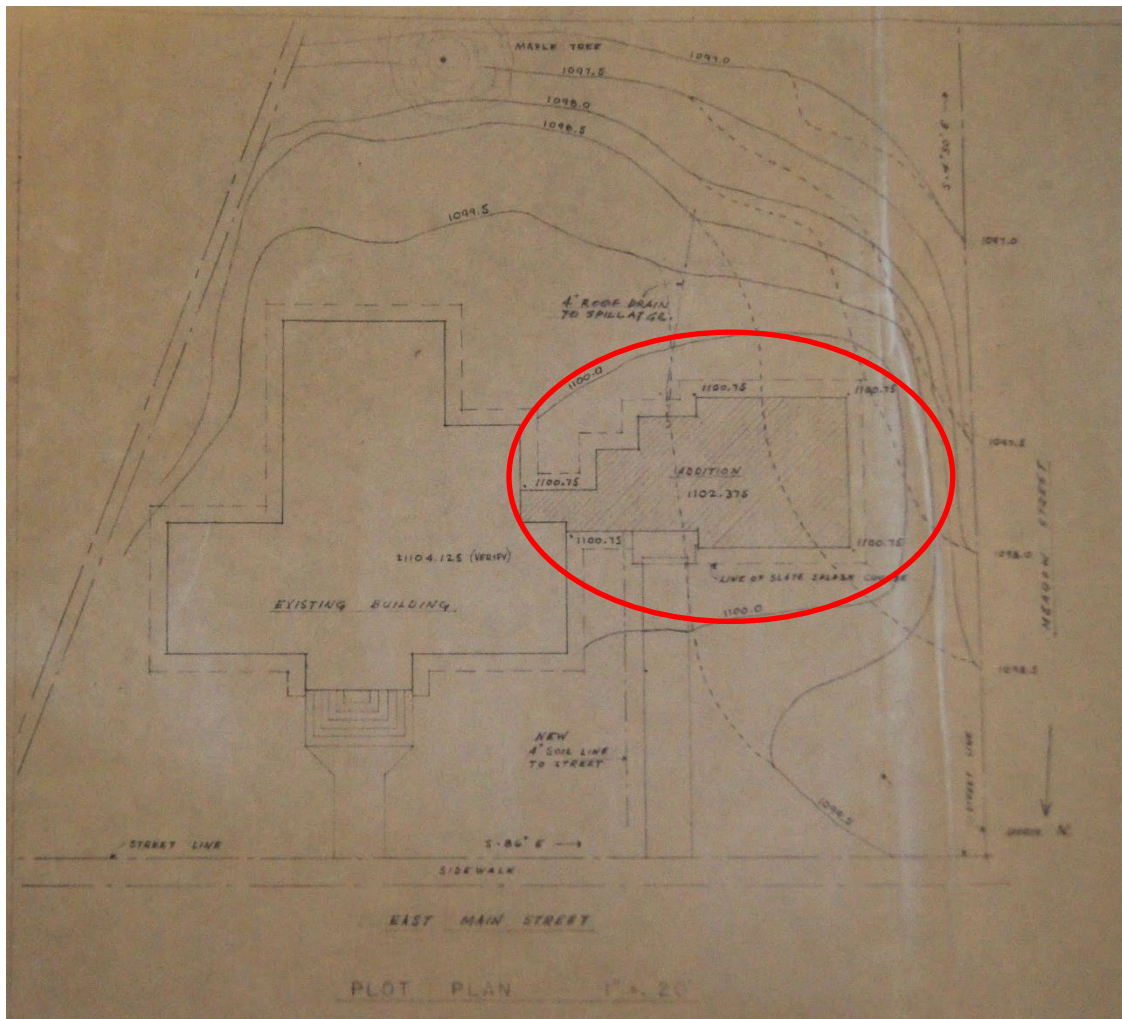


Figure 22: Advertisement for new children's librarian at Fletcher Memorial Library, *Rutland Daily Herald*, November 16, 1963.



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Figure 23: Plan for new children's wing of the Fletcher Memorial Library, 1962, Helmer and Associates.

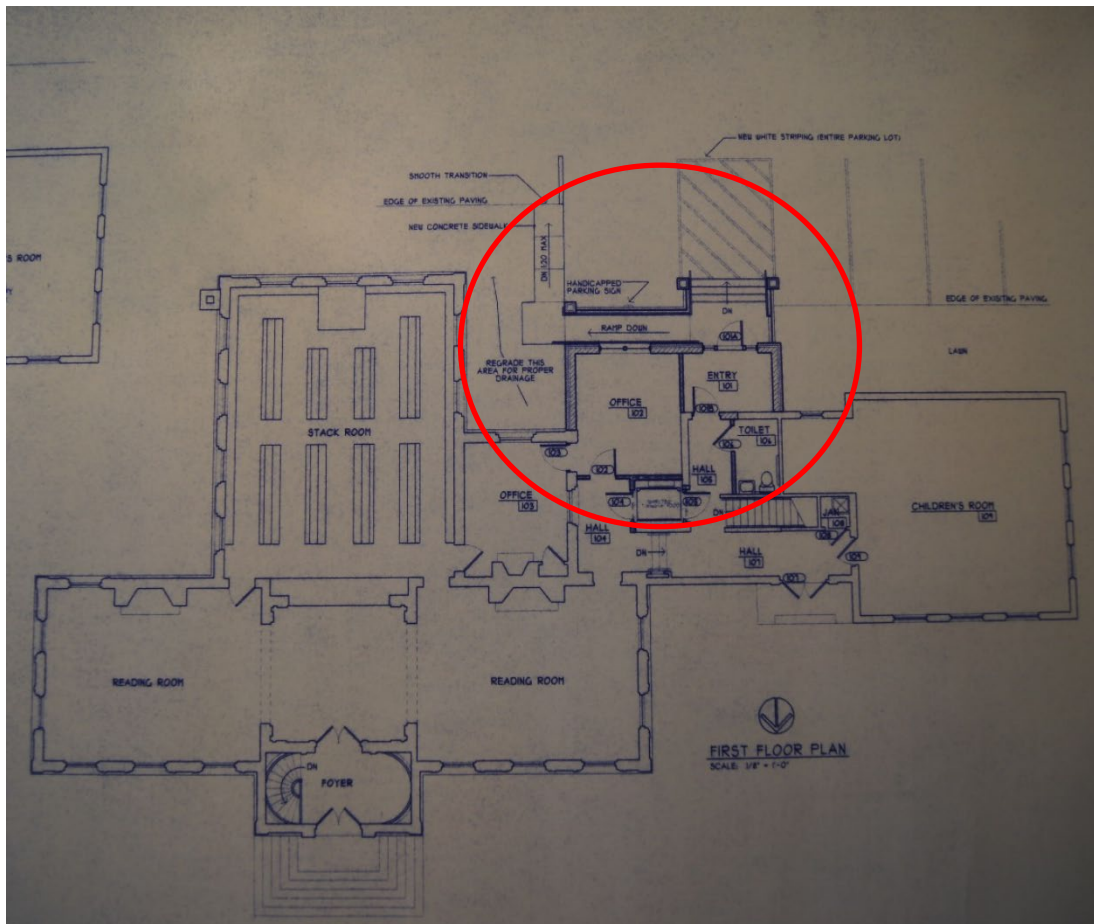


Figure 24: Plan for accessibility modifications, 2002, N.B.F. Architects..

Fletcher Memorial Library
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Fletcher Memorial Library Head Librarians/Library Directors

1901	Miss Mary E. Mastin
October 1902-1918	Miss Frances Marcella Pierce Mrs. Ralph (Dorothy Hubbard) Parker Roxanna Sears (became Mrs. A.J. Shannon) Mrs. Charles (Barbara Hines) Rock Mrs. Kate (Hammond) Fogerty
1925	Miss Agnes Norton
1925	Miss Margaret Kanaly
1925	Miss Vivian Brown
1925-1936	Mrs. Rogers (Jean Kellogg) Claggett
1936-1942	Miss Pauline Moody Miss Ruth Gains
1944-June 1945	Miss Rose Miele
1946	Mrs. Royal (Arvilla) Gladding
1952-1995	Mrs. Connie Bixby Mrs. Carol Wu
1998-2000	Mrs. Ann Wingate
2000-present (2024)	Ms. Jill A. Tofferi

Fletcher Memorial Library
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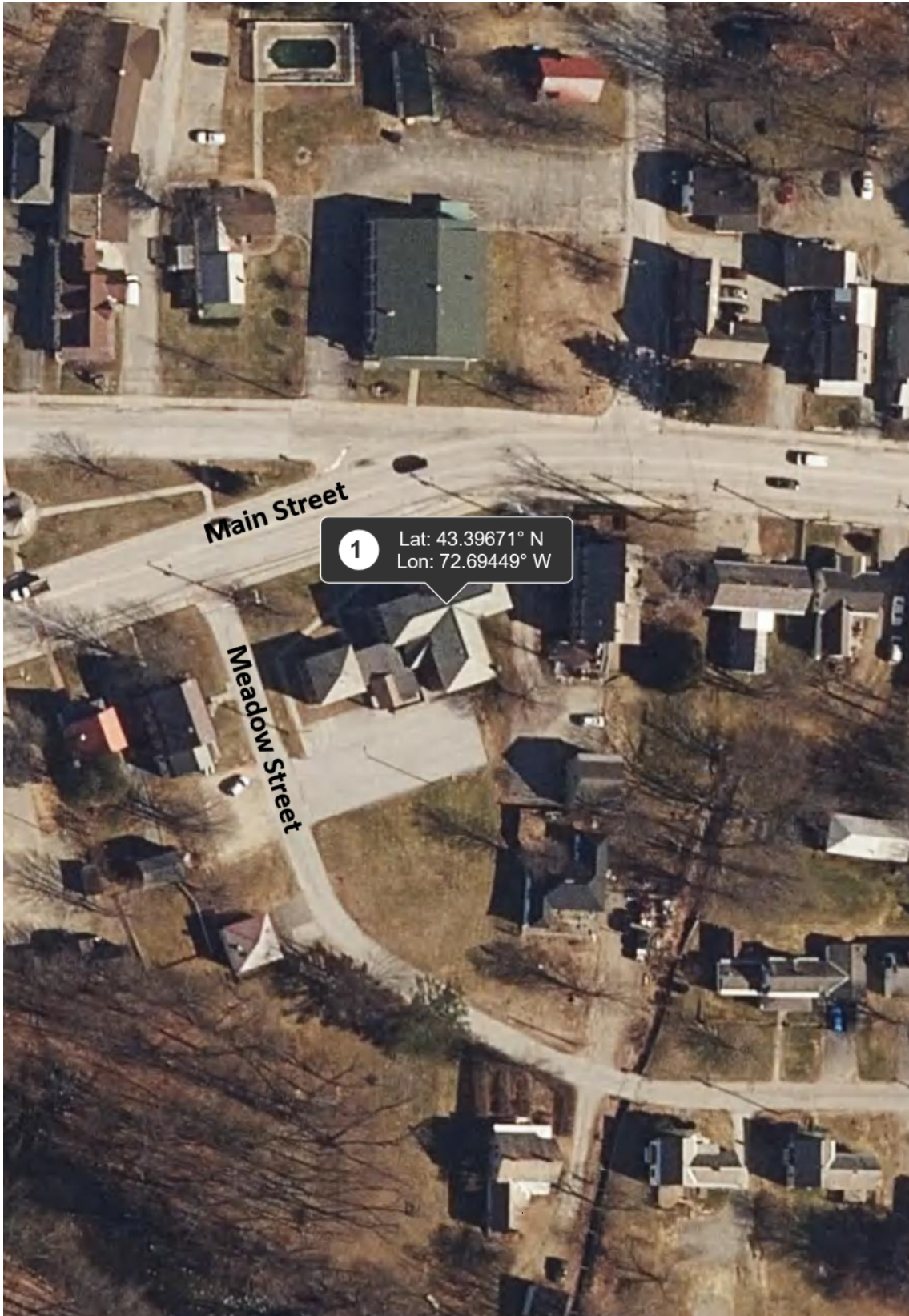
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- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
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Fletcher Memorial Library

88 Main Street, Ludlow, Windsor County, Vermont 05149



LEGEND

1. Fletcher Memorial Library Historic Property

NOTES

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0.04 0 0.02 0.04 Miles

WGS_1984_Web_Mercator_Auxiliary_Sphere 1" = 95 Ft. 1cm = 11 Meters

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






April 19, 2024



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LEGEND

-  Airports
 -  Rail Lines
 -  Town Boundaries
 -  County Boundaries
 -  Buildings
 -  Village Boundaries
 -  Historic Property Boundary / Parcel Boundary
- .67 acre parcel boundary is historic property boundary

NOTES

This map was created with the VT Interactive Map Viewer.

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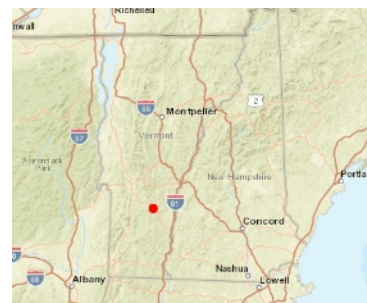
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April 19, 2024



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LEGEND

- Airports
- Rail Lines
- Town Boundaries
- County Boundaries
- Buildings
- Village Boundaries

1. Fletcher Memorial Library Historic Property Location

NOTES

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0.14 0 0.07 0.14 Miles

WGS_1984_Web_Mercator_Auxiliary_Sphere 1" = 381 Ft. 1cm = 46 Meters

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1: 4,568

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