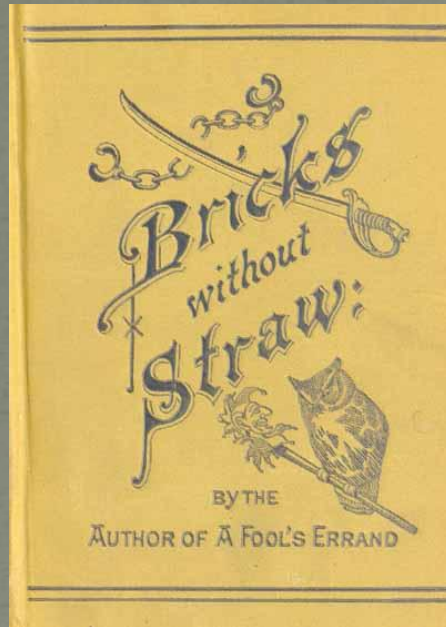


A History of Mattituck-Laurel Library

“A town without a library is a town without a soul.”

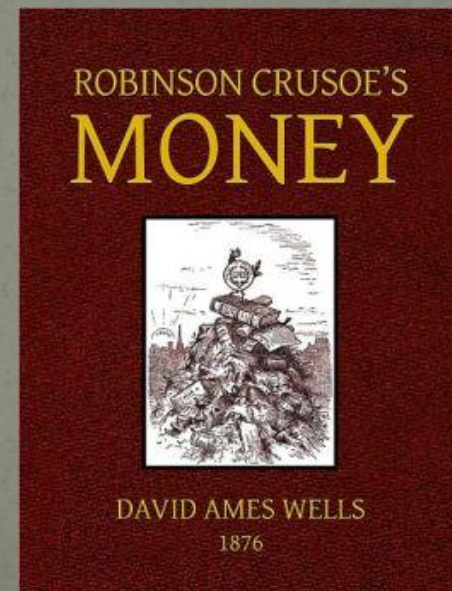
Cicero

Two of the Library's First Books



Published in 1880, *Bricks Without Straw* offers an inside view of the struggle to create a just society in the post-slavery South. As a leading Radical Republican, this white author, Albion W. Tourgée, played a key role in drafting a democratized Constitution for North Carolina after the Civil War, and he served as a state superior court judge during Reconstruction. *Bricks Without Straw* is Tourgée's fictionalized account of how Reconstruction was sabotaged. It is a chilling picture of violence against African Americans condoned, civil rights abrogated, constitutional amendments subverted, and electoral fraud institutionalized.

Robinson Crusoe's Money; or, The Remarkable Financial Fortunes and Misfortunes of a Remote Island Community (1876) was Dr. David Wells's explanation of how the complex system of money and currency works. At the advice of friends, he decided to discuss such a dry and abstract subject through the vehicle of the familiar Robinson Crusoe story in which islanders progress from bartering to more advanced instruments of exchange.





The Gildersleeve Brothers store (right) next to the Gildersleeve home, on the northeast corner of Love Lane and Pike Street, c. 1900.

“For many years we have sighed and longed for a good village library. . . . Thanks, however, to Rev. William Hedges, a start has been made and bids fair to be a very successful one too. About \$200 in shares of \$5, have already been subscribed, the books ordered and the first installment is now here waiting to be arranged and cataloged. The library is to be known as the Mattituck Library Association At present the books will be kept at the store of Gildersleeve Brothers. . . . We think all who care for good reading ought to give the Library their support, as it is intended that what few books it does contain shall be of as high an order as possible.”

~ *The Long Island Traveler*, February 25, 1881.

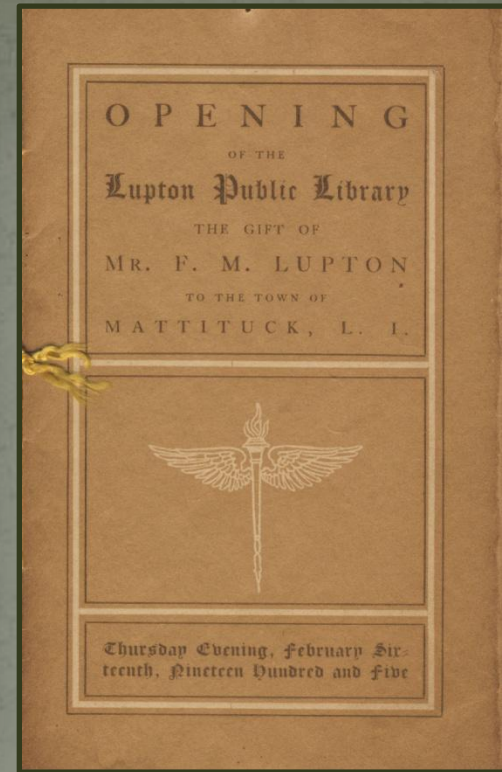


The Octagon House, c. 1910.

The Mattituck Library is founded by Elmer D. Tuthill. The original 450 books that comprised the original collection of the library were housed in the Octagon House on the Main Road.



Library Hall, c. 1905



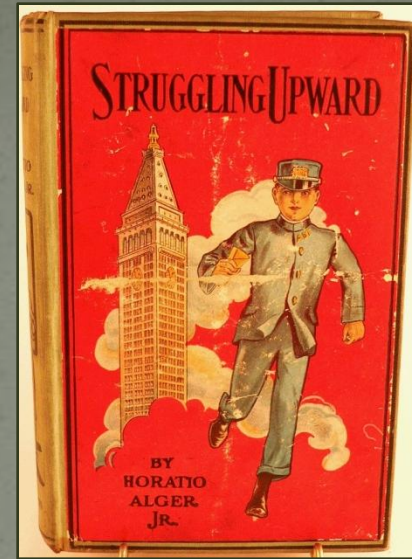
Library Hall, on the corner of Westphalia Avenue and Pike Street, was Mattituck's great hall, donated to the people of the town in 1905 by Frank Moore Lupton, a native son who found success in New York City publishing. The library was moved from the Octagon House to Library Hall. The new Lupton Public Library opened officially on the snowy night of February 16, 1905. After the ceremonies, a dance was held in the hall accompanied by the Eclipse Orchestra. On the main floor was the library, the Mattituck National Bank and Trust, and Dr. Lahy's Pharmacy.

On the second floor of Library Hall was the assembly hall, which could accommodate 800 people and had a stage on one end. The seats were moved for dances and basketball games. As the home of the Mattituck Literary Society, the Lecture Association, and the Dramatic Association, the hall provided the venue for entertainment, education, and self-expression.



Library Hall Reading Room.

“Frank Moore Lupton saw that the supply of juvenile books was limited in our Library so he has just made it a present of a complete set of Horatio Alger Jr’s works. The Library has just added 85 new volumes purchased from the Tabard Inn Library. Miss Esther Leslie Reeve has made the reading room a present of a complimentary subscription to the Modern Woman, a bright and interesting magazine.” ~ *County Review*, 1905.





The Mattituck Moving Picture Theater

In March 2, 1939, the Library Hall building was badly damaged by fire. At the time, the main floor housed the library and the offices of Dr. Peterson, Bergmann, and Jones. The second floor was occupied by the Mattituck Moving Picture Theater; Mrs. Spenser Wickham was the proprietor.

It was thought that sparks from a nearby grass fire lodged in the dry wooden shingles which covered the sides of the building and burned their way to the roof. The moving picture theater was badly damaged by water and smoke, and the Doctors' offices and the library by smoke.

About 1941, the Mattituck Literary Association, which was the holding corporation for the building, sold the big frame landmark to Mrs. Marjorie S. Wooten, then the owner of the Mattituck Moving Picture Theater. Mattituck-Laurel Library continued to occupy the first floor of the building.



The architect's rendering of the new Mattituck Free Library.

In 1948, the Mattituck Free Library purchased a parcel of land from the Roman Catholic Diocese on the south side of Route 25 which had been the site of the community's old schoolhouse.

In 1957, the need for a new headquarters for the Mattituck Free Library became evident when Library Hall was again put up for sale. The Library Association formed a Building Committee and funds were raised.

In 1961 plans were announced to build the new library building. Georgian colonial in architecture, the new library would be built on Main Road adjacent to Our Lady of Good Counsel Church. The building was designed for further expansion.



At the controls of the rig is Judge Tuthill, standing center is Southold Town Supervisor, Lester M. Albertson, and standing left is Clement Booth, Suffolk County Library director.

The Legacy of Frank Moore Lupton

In July 1961 the groundbreaking ceremony was held for the building of a new public library.

The total cost of the project was \$75,000. The builders were H. R. Reeve & Sons. The Board of Trustees for the Library at the time were Mrs. H.B. Hayden, Mrs. G. Herbert Amberman, Mrs. Arthur N. Penny, George Gildersleeve, Chester B. Melot, and Judge Ralph Tuthill.

Frank Moore Lupton, who had donated Library Hall to the town, was to be commended for his vision because he had founded and financed the Mattituck Literary Association, and his heirs assigned their shares of that part of his estate relative to the Literary Association holdings to the Mattituck Free Library Association, thus laying the groundwork for the present accomplishment. When the present building appeared on the drafting board, there was about \$25,000 of the Lupton contribution still available.



Judge Tuthill honors Mrs. Phillips

Mrs. Catherine K. Phillips singlehandedly maintained the Mattituck Free Library for 37 years. She is pictured above at work in Library Hall, and later as she is honored at her retirement by receiving a scroll from Judge Ralph W. Tuthill, President of the Board of Trustees. Besides the routine chore of discharging books, she took care of registration, cataloguing, book purchase, monthly and annual reports, reference work, and working with children. Mrs. Phillips supervised the transition from Library Hall to the new library on Main Street.

The Librarian and the “Dragon”

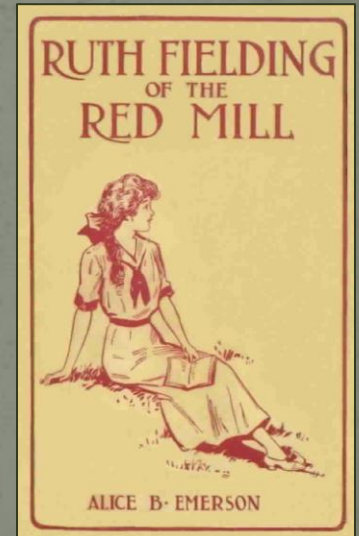
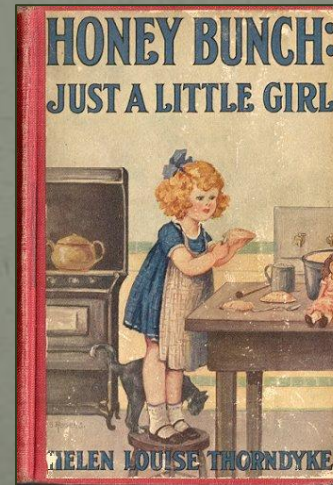
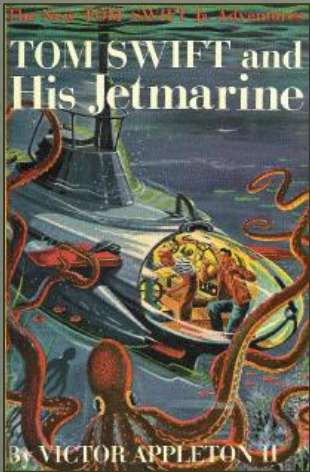
Catherine Phillips, the librarian in Library Hall, was gratified and delighted when she was consulted by young readers, and she always steered them to worthwhile reading.

When New York State appropriated tax money for public libraries, Phillips resented the requirement for the Excessioner’s approval of book buying and books in circulation.

The Excessioner, known as the “Dragon,” visited the Library annually to inspect the files. Books certain not to meet with his approval disappeared before the visit. These books were the Tom Swift, the Bobbsey Twins, the Honey Bunch and the Ruth Fielding series. Since they were harmless and entertaining, they reappeared on the shelves after the “Dragon” left.



Catherine Phillips





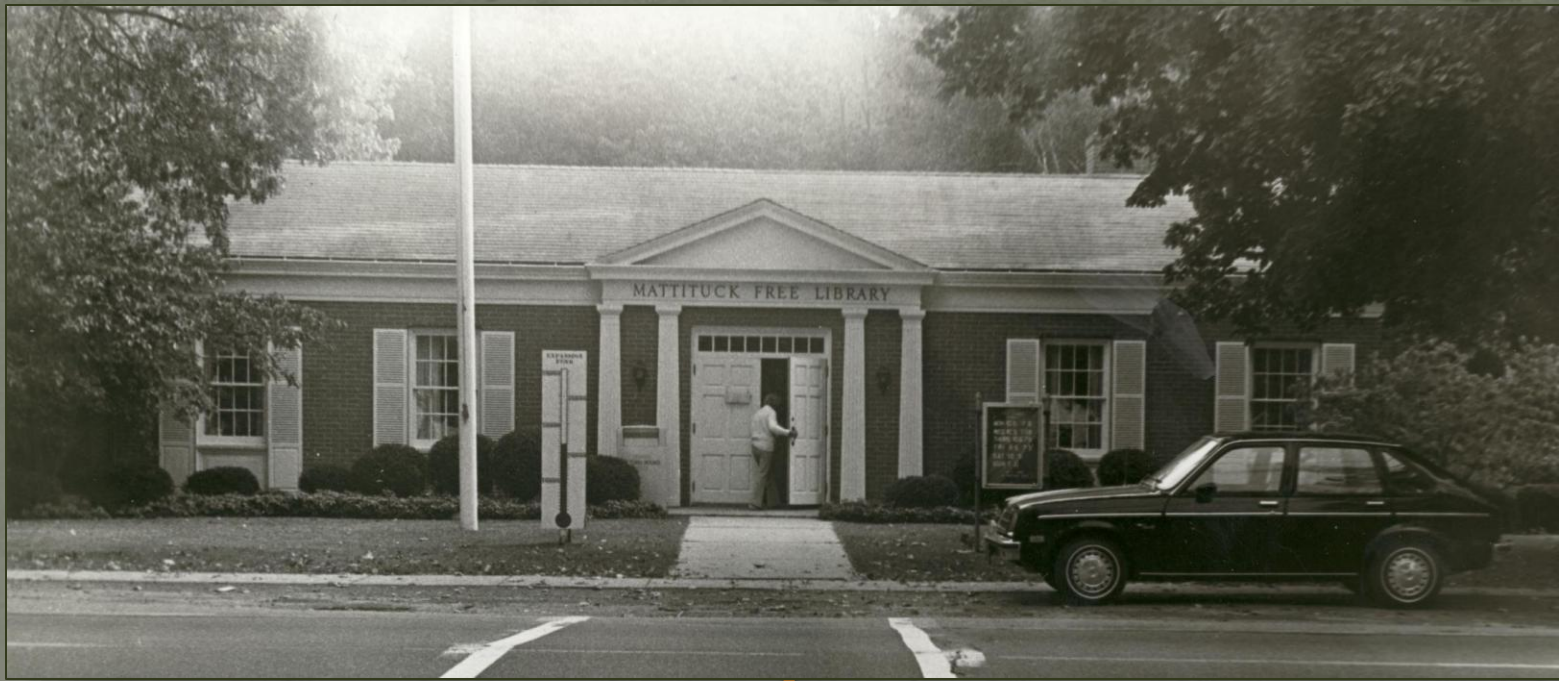
In May 1962, the new library opened and Boy Scout Troop 39 moved books from Library Hall storage to the new building.

Left to right: Russell Nine, Leonard Llewellyn, Bob Greaves, Doug Llewellyn, Frank Dries, John Rose, and Richard Haeg, and Tim Brigham leaning in with his arm on floor.

By 1963, there were no buyers interested in the Library Hall building. The building, considered unsafe for public assembly, was demolished. The monumental building had served the community well for over fifty years.

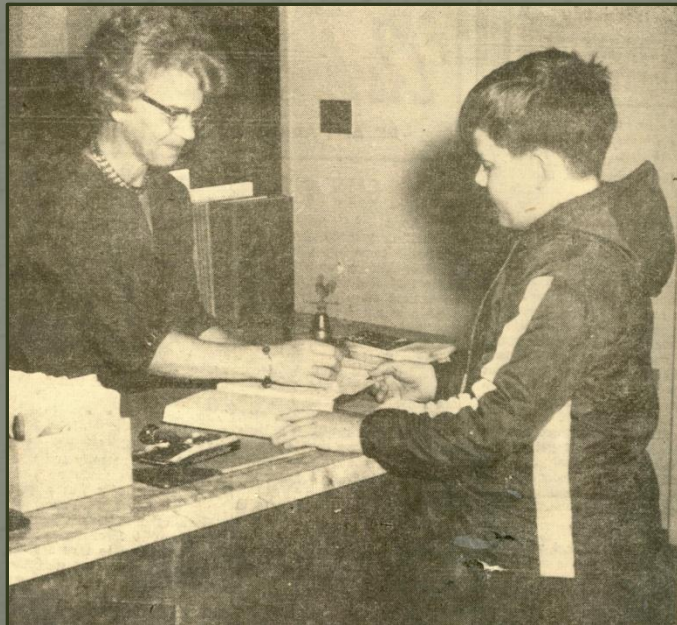


Courtesy of Mattituck-Laurel Historical Society



The entrance to the new library was on Main Road, and to the right of the entrance doors was the Circulation Desk.

Second from the left is Mrs. Vernon G. Strub, who replaced Catherine Phillips as the new library's director. Judge Tuthill looks on.



Mrs. Beatrice Horn succeeded Mrs. Strub in 1965. Here she checks out a book for Myles Connors.



Left to right: George Gildersleeve, president of the Library Board of Trustees; Mrs. Alice Rosenfeld, new library director; Mrs. Beatrice Horn, retiring director; and Mr. Charles Abrahams, president of Friends of the Library. Mrs. Rosenfeld became the new director in 1972.

The Katie Dexter Room

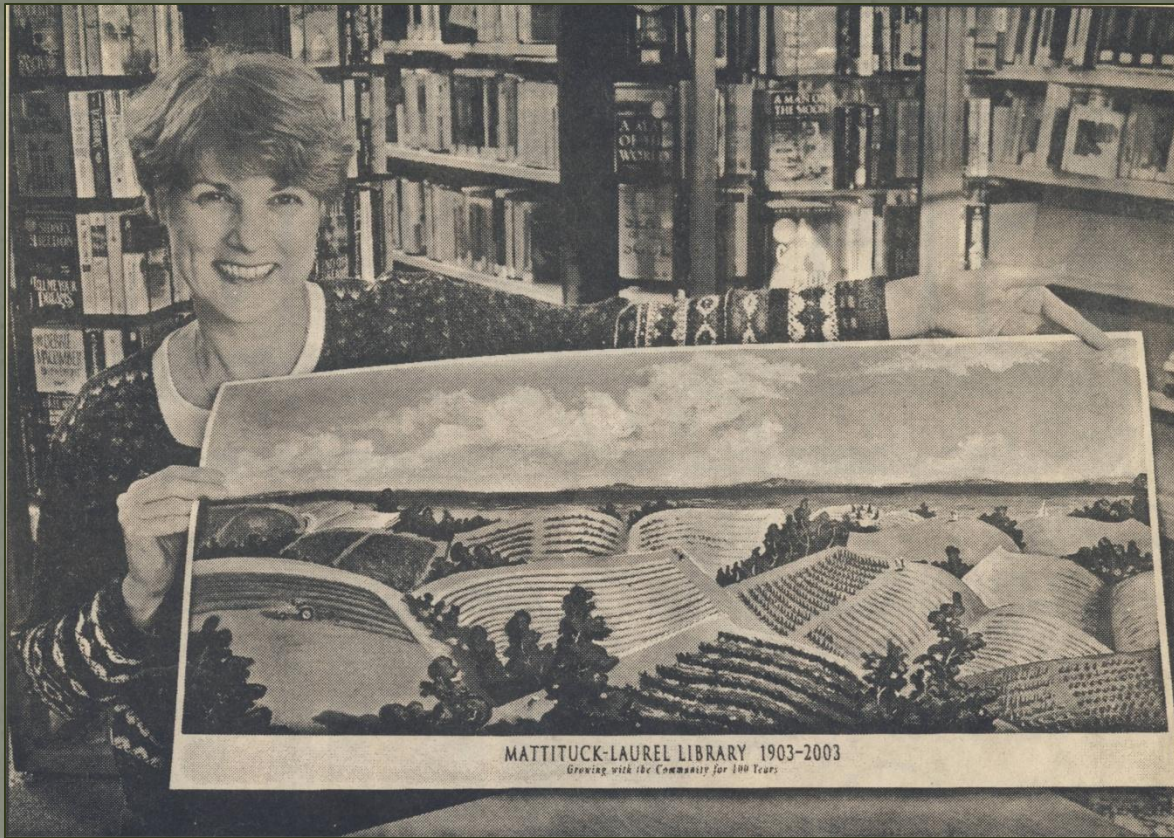


On Sunday October 11, 1981, the new Katie Dexter Room was officially opened. The addition to the library was made possible in large by the generosity of Mattituck resident Katie Dexter, providing a new space for a Children's room. Left to right: Katie Dexter, Louise Burns, Alice Rosenfeld, Arthur Tillman, William Pell (Town Supervisor), little Gary Lutz, Ralph Tuthill, Peter Hanlon, and Ruth Field.

The Katie Dexter Room



This 1998 photo, taken from the parking lot, shows the Katie Dexter Room with its high windows. The room presently houses the Reference Desk, Teen Space, and Local History Room.



In 1992, Kay Zegel became the library's new director. Kay was the former director of the Brookhaven Free Library, and before that, head reference librarian at Islip Public Library. In 1993, the Mattituck Free Library was renamed the Mattituck-Laurel Library to acknowledge that the library also serves the community of Laurel.

In the photo above, taken in 2002, Kay displays the library's 100th-anniversary poster designed by Paul Kreiling.

A New Expansion: Circulation Area, Children's Room, and Meeting Room Space



In 1998, the residents of Mattituck and Laurel voted to approve the construction of an addition to the library. The expansion plan would ease the library's overcrowding and allow for wheelchair access. The expansion included a new circulation area, a new Children's Room, and Meeting Room Space on the lower level. Left to right: Tom Riker, (Shoreline Construction) Board Members; Tom Dickerson, Dennis Deerkowski, Construction Manager, Joella Vreeland, Joe Mellender, Diane Jordan, Frank McNulty, Kay Zegel (Library Director), and Michael Tortorice (Architect).

The Expansion Foundation



In 1998, the foundation for the new expansion was excavated and poured adjacent to the Katie Dexter room. This would be the foundation for the Circulation Room, the Children's wing, as well as the area for the Meeting Room space.

The Library Expansion Frame Rises



The library expansion assumes its shape as the steel beams are set in place.

The Evolving Structure of the Library . . .





Completed in 2000, the new expansion doubled the space of the original library and provided an illuminated space for a new Reference area with computers, a lobby for the Circulation Desk, an office, reading area, and shelving; a new children's wing, and a large meeting room and other meeting rooms in the basement.



The New TWEEN Space, 2008.

The original children's section of the library provided materials for ages birth through 12 years old. As the population of older children expanded, there was a need for the library to grow with it. The Children's Department of the Mattituck-Laurel Library had a vision to provide a dedicated space for children ages 8-12 years old, children designated as "Tweens."

On February 29, 2008 the "Tween Place" was opened, with the official dedication to Floyd Vail held on May 18, 2008. The 500 square foot area was built through donations, without the use of any taxpayer monies. The space provides age appropriate reading/listening materials, a game table, comfortable seating and the latest laptop technology.



The New Tween Space transformed the façade of the library to its present form.



Chart of Librarians

Library Hall (Pike Street)

Elmer Tuthill	1903-1911
Sarah Craven	1912
Cora Jackson	1913-1924
Eloise Robinson	1924-1925
Hazel Tuthill	1925-1926
Catherine Phillips	1926-1963 (Mattituck Free Library)

Mattituck Free Library (Main Road)

Mrs. David C. Morris	1963 Fall
Mrs. Vernon Strub	1963-1965
Mrs. Mary Grefe	October/November 1965
Mrs. Beatrice Horn	November 1965 – April 1972
Mrs. Alice Rosenfeld	April 1972 – 1984
Mrs. Maria V. Dooley	1984 - 1985
Mr. Thomas Fleetwood	1986 - 1991
Mrs. Kay Zegel	1992- present

