

The Atwater Memorial Library

This building, which was completed and dedicated in 1943, is the gift of James C. Atwater of New York City, who died in Springfield, Massachusetts, November 1st, 1911. Mr. Atwater was born March 11th, 1824, in North Branford, and he gave this building to the people of his native town as a memorial to his father, the Rev. Charles Atwater, a Pastor of the Congregational Church in North Branford from 1809 to the time of his death, February 21st, 1825.

This tablet is placed upon this building by Charles B. Atwater, grandson of Reverend Atwater, through whose efforts this building was carried through to completion, February, 1943.

North Branford Library Board

Judy Molleur, Acting Chair and Secretary

Judy Neubig, Treasurer

Judy Barton

Marion D. Bradley

Staff of Atwater Library

Robert Hull, Library Director

Jane Richmond, Adult Librarian

Helen Classen, Children's Librarian

Thank You to:

All the participants in the program

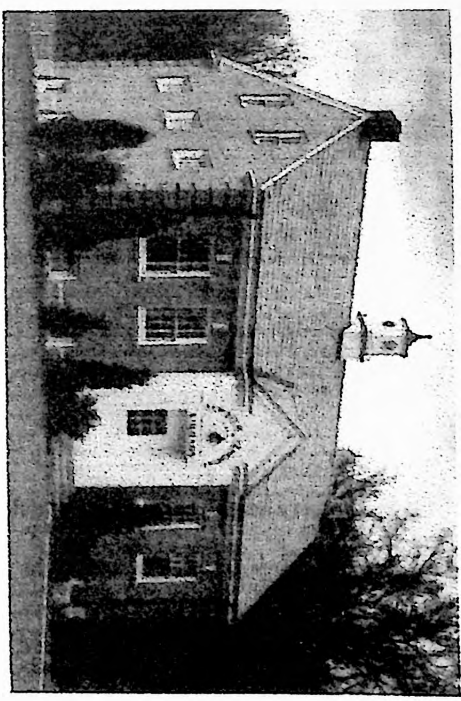
The North Branford Women's Club

The Totoket Historical Society

Ashley Joiner for printing the program

Hall Rental for their cooperation

The Totoket Times, Sound, and Branford Review
for their coverage



The Board of Library Directors of the

Town of North Branford

request the honor of your presence
at the rededication of

The Atwater Memorial Library
on

Sunday, July thirteenth
two thousand and three
at two o'clock
North Branford Center

Order of Exercises

SALUTE TO THE FLAG AND PRESENTATION OF COLORS

Governor's Foot Guard Honor Guard
North Branford Fife and Drum Corps

INVOCATION

The Reverend D. Dodd, Pastor, Zion Episcopal Church

WELCOME TO GUESTS

THE ATWATER LIBRARY FROM IDEA TO REALITY

Marion D. Bradley, Library Board

HIGHLIGHTS SINCE 1943

Judy Barton, Library Board

HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

Robert Hull, Library Director

SHARING MEMORIES

Judy Neubig, Library Board

SERVICE OF REDEDICATION

The Reverend Joseph Kaminsky, Pastor, St. Augustine's Church

To the furtherance of the culture of our community, which has been blessed by this generous gift in loving memory of Reverend Charles Atwater.

All: We rededicate this Library

That men and women may more fully appreciate the value of books in stimulating self-culture and education

All: We rededicate this Library.

That our children may here read "the garnered wisdom of the years," in a setting conducive to noble living

All: We rededicate this Library.

To the glorification and the more adequate dissemination of the rich treasures of literature in all ages, the more adequately to combat the modern reckless distortion of values

All: We rededicate this Library.

That all who enter its portals may enrich their lives and acquire enthusiasm for books, which will give wings to the mind, and re-create man's spirit

All: We rededicate this Library.

BENEDICTION

The Reverend Olivia Robinson, Pastor, North Branford
Congregational Church

MUSIC

North Branford Fife and Drum Corps

TOURS OF THE LIBRARY AND REYNOLDS-BEERS HOUSE

SOCIAL HOUR

**Speeches Given by the Library Board and Library Director at the
Rededication of the Atwater Memorial Library
Sunday, July 13, 2003**

The rededication of the Atwater Memorial Library, on July 13 of its 60th anniversary year of 2003, mirrored the original dedication in 1943. Three local pastors helped to conduct the service of rededication: The Reverend D. Dodd of Zion Episcopal Church; The Reverend Joseph Kaminsky of St. Augustine's Church; and The Reverend Olivia Robinson of North Branford Congregational Church. The Governor's Foot Guard Honor Guard and the North Branford Fife and Drum Corps participated in the ceremony. Exhibits of Atwater history were displayed by the Totoket Historical Society in the Reynolds/Beers House next door.

Three Library Board members and the Library Director gave speeches covering the past, present and future of the Atwater Memorial Library. Those speeches are printed in this pamphlet, along with a copy of the rededication program.

The Atwater Library:

From Idea to Reality

Marion D. Bradley, Library Board

Highlights Since 1943

Judith Barton, Library Board

Hopes for the Future

Robert Hull, Library Director

Sharing Memories

Judith Neubig, Library Board

The Atwater Library: from Idea to Reality

Marion D. Bradley, Library Board Member

When I got ready to prepare some comments about the events leading up to the building of the Atwater Library, I got a copy of a paper my mother Carrie G. Doody had written many years ago. As I read it, I decided that her remarks were still valid now. My mother was librarian at the Little Red Schoolhouse in Northford and the first librarian at Atwater. All of the books for the Atwater Library were delivered to our home to be accessioned and ready for the opening. Ruth Foote (Mrs. Ellsworth B.) spent days getting the books ready.

Alexander McKiernan, Superintendent of Trap Rock Quarry, donated the money to buy children's books and Morris Shapiro, a farmer on Route 80, donated money to be used for the purchase of mysteries.

Mr. Charles B. Atwater of Springfield, Massachusetts, grandson of the Reverend Charles Atwater, had the Atwater Memorial Library built and furnished and endowed as his choice of a fitting memorial to his grandfather. An interesting story underlies this gift to the town.

In the will of Mr. James Atwater (the uncle of Charles B. Atwater), who died in 1911, a fund was created with a request that it be used by his brother to erect a fitting memorial to their father, if he had not done so before his death. This was a *request*, not a bequest. The will was executed and the fund went to Mr. David Atwater, Charles B. Atwater's father, who considered several memorials but decided upon none. He died a few years later and the fund went into the possession of Charles B. Atwater.

Charles B. Atwater made several trips to North Branford, and discovered that due to the burning of the original church and landscaping at later dates, the little "burying ground" adjacent to the church had been obliterated and, with others of the earliest years, his grandfather's grave was unmarked and unknown. This grieved him greatly. The same old parsonage was still standing on North Street. He talked with several of the older inhabitants and delayed action on the memorial. He invested the money for some twenty years, and the careful investments multiplied the principal many times.

He and Mrs. Atwater became acquainted with the Reverend Franklyn Countryman, pastor of the Congregational Church, Mrs. Countryman, and their daughter, Miss May Countryman. A friendship ripened and it was partially terminated by the deaths of the Reverend Countryman and Mrs. Countryman. It was Mr. Atwater's wish that Miss Countryman become the librarian when the building was completed. This Miss Countryman was planning to do, but her untimely death made another change necessary.

Mrs. Atwater died, and their daughter was not as active in promoting the memorial as her mother. Mr. Atwater, nearly an octogenarian by this time, went to live in a hotel suite. Distance, deaths, and details seemed to combine to make the likelihood of a library very dim. In fact, Mr. Atwater advised Judge Ellsworth B. Foote and Selectman Alden J. Hill that he had given up the idea for a time.

A financier, Mr. Atwater was extremely particular about the minutest detail. The library

site had to be cleared by a judgment handed down by the Superior Court. Previously, the matter had been submitted to the State Legislature, for the property had been designated as a place for parade and drill for the members of the militia and later the Continental Army. He was concerned that the title would not allow it to be used for any other purpose. Judge Foote, Town Clerk R. Earle Beers, and Selectman Hill spent many hours, here and in Hartford. The Reverend George D. Lessley, pastor of the Congregational Church, also assisted until he left for Germany as an Army chaplain in World War II.

The population of the entire town at that time was only 1,438. A small library was already established in the "Little Red School House". Many townspeople were pleased with the idea that the new building might provide triple service. The main floor was designed as a library large enough for an untold number of years, and a basement room fitted up with lights, tables and chairs for a community meeting room. Original plans were for a little museum on the second floor where historical or local antiques might be displayed. This was changed to provide a room for the Selectmen and for other town uses. At that time the Selectmen and Probate Court had to meet in the Beers' home. For this reason, a stairway was built with an entrance at the rear of the building whereby those using the other two rooms would not disturb the library. Additional toilet facilities were installed for these "outsiders".

During the war, the downstairs room was used for many months by the Red Cross surgical unit. The upstairs room was also used as a court room for a period of time. One evening each week, there were more people going in and out of the back entrance than in the main one. Because of the noise, and the confusion created by many out-of-towners using the front door, the courtroom was moved elsewhere. However, the Selectmen used the room for some time.

Carrie G. Doody, librarian at the Little Red School House, was appointed to serve as the first librarian at the Atwater Library when building was really begun. Mr. Atwater, now in his eighties and confined to his bed and chair most of the time, looked for "notes of progress" several times each month and personal reports when some new phase was begun or information needed. This necessitated trips to Springfield as long as he lived. My mother wrote those "notes of progress" and made the informational trips.

Mr. Atwater was never able to visit North Branford after work was begun on the building. He was happy that his memorial was placed at the corner of North Street, the street on which his grandfather lived and a spot of local historical importance. He never dreamed that the little farming community would outgrow his library. He died feeling that the memorial he was able to build would continue to serve "all the people of North Branford" as he wished.

The Atwater Library: Highlights Since 1943

Judith Barton, Library Board Member

Thank you, Marion. It's been fun to hear a firsthand account about the birth of this library. marion, by the way, is the only person on the Library Board named Marion. The other three of us are named Judy. There's Judy Molleur, our Secretary and acting Chairperson, who unfortunately had to work today; Judy Neubig, our treasurer who will speak to you a little later; and I'm the third. To adapt a line from the old "Bob Newhart Show": The Board has this Judy, my sister Judy and my other sister Judy. We do have one vacancy on the Board – the name of the appointee to be announced ... let's hope soon.

My own relatively brief service on the Library Board has been a learning experience. We deal with everything from library plumbing to protecting the privacy of library patrons. Privacy is something the Board has become especially conscious of as a result of the U.S.A. Patriot Act, which congress adopted after the tragedy of 9/11. During the last few months we as a board have been discussing how best to update our libraries' guidelines on *Confidentiality of Patron Records*, while abiding by the new law. That's just one of the challenges presented to the Board over the past six decades.

I wasn't here that day 60 years ago – in the midst of another war – when the library was dedicated. But I did have a chance recently to look up the newspaper headlines for May 8, 1943, to get a feel for what that Saturday was like. And I realized that everyone here at the event must have been in a jubilant mood – and not only because of the lovely new library. That morning the main front-page story told of major progress by the Allies in World War II. Both British and American forces had just routed the Axis powers in North Africa.

Many of us living here now either weren't yet born the year the library opened or were living elsewhere. I grew up in New Jersey in a town that didn't invest in a library building until I moved away in the 1960's. Our public library was in the basement of a grammar school. A building like Atwater would have been wonderful!

My husband and I are only two of the many people who moved to North Branford in the last 60 years. The town's population has gone from just over 14 **hundred** in the 1940 census to approximately 14 **thousand** today – ten times more.

And as the population has grown, so has the use of the library. The cost has risen, of course, from Atwater's first annual budget of just under \$3,000 to about a quarter of a million dollars now. The total for Atwater and the smith Library in Northford is now about a half million dollars a year. Library hours have risen dramatically, too – from 11 1/2 hours a week back then to 51 hours now.

The circulation of both libraries now totals almost 199,000 per year. This figure is in addition to the many other growing services our capable library staff provides, such as:

- Answering about 4,700 reference questions in a recent year.
- Cataloging almost 4,800 new items so patrons know we have them.
- Registering almost 700 new borrowers. The town, in fact, now has more than 9,000

residents with library cards – and remember, that is in a town with a population of 14,000.

Our local residents, by the way, are able to borrow books from other municipal libraries, which are delivered here for their use. And almost 1,200 times in one recent year, people took advantage of this fact in North Branford. They are also able to use their North Branford library cards in other towns.

To quote one of my favorite authors, Mark Twain, “The man who does *not* read good books has no advantage over the man who *can’t* read them.” It’s good to see proof the North Branford is a town of readers.

It’s amazing to realize that our libraries are now dealing with things never imagined not only by Mark Twain but even by anyone living in 1943.

Whoever thought then that libraries would have to post signs telling people to please not use their cell phones?

Another change is that in 1979 our Library Department joined LEAP, a cooperative effort among six area towns providing automated library services. For the past three years, the North Branford libraries have had a home page on the Internet reachable through leaplibraries.org.

Who in 1943 would have imagined being able to use a computer while still at home to see if the books they want to borrow are on the shelf or already checked out? Or to renew material by computer? to borrow passes to museums while at the library? Never mind the public’s being able to come to the library to use computers to search the Internet, as people in North Branford did about 1,600 times last year?

- And being able to check out large-print books?
- And videos and DVDs?
- And books recorded on CDs and on tape?
- And music CDs?

Wow!

And I can’t omit the new type of books known as “graphic novels” at both libraries. These are illustrated books, popular with adults as well as younger readers.

Not only have the *items* available in the library changed, but the *programs* have multiplied. Genealogy classes were offered earlier this year. The summer reading program for children is in full swing – through August 8. Each year, more than 500 youngsters usually participate. In addition, children’s story hours will resume in the fall at both libraries. Also in the fall we’ll again have a series called “Time for Baby and Me” for the very, very young and their parents.

The town built an addition for Atwater – and one for Smith – in 1967. Today we could use even more space. If we had more room, we’d be able to reduce the need to delete items from the shelves in order to make room for new material. A second addition to Atwater is in the planning stage, and for several years has officially been part of the “Town of North Branford Capital Improvements Plan.” I can’t tell you when it will happen, but we are optimistic. One other improvement the Library Board would like to see is to make both libraries more accessible to children with disabilities.

In contrast to changes unimagined in 1943, it may be back to the future in one respect. We hope to reinstate the Friends of the North Branford Library, a group of supporters that

unfortunately disappeared several years ago.

To sum up these 60 years with an oxymoron: Atwater has changed in order *not* to change. It continues its 60-year mission of offering resources both for serious pursuit of knowledge and for just plain fun.

I wish we could all be around to see what other wonderful things our libraries will be offering 60 years from now.

The Atwater Library: Hopes for the Future

Robert Hull, Library Director

When Charles Atwater and the citizens of North Branford planned the Atwater Library, they thought of the past, of the memory of a grandfather and a beloved country pastor in the local church. But more important, they looked to the future -- to the cultural needs of their community in the years to come.

Today we are doing much the same thing: looking to the past and to the future. What does the Atwater Memorial Library need now, in order to serve our town well into the 21st century? To me, our needs can be summarized in five words: **space, access, usefulness, beauty, and cooperation.**

First, we need **space**. Thirty years ago, the Library Director at the time warned the Board that North Branford's library system had two more years -- there were already 32,000 volumes in the collection and within that time the two libraries would become impossibly packed. Well, I guess he was crying wolf. Here we are in 2003 with 64,000 volumes on our shelves, having given the town 30 years of service beyond his dire warning. But let me assure you today, that we are not crying wolf this time. We now need to sell, give away, or throw away one book for every new book or other item we purchase. **We need more room:** not just for books, but for children's programs, public computers, DVD's and other new materials, and much more.

I can't discuss space without mentioning the Smith Library in Northford. When Mr. Atwater planned this library, he knew Northford was served by the Little Red Schoolhouse. When the Edward Smith Library was built 13 years later, it was intended to cooperate with Atwater. As we plan for Atwater's future, we see the two libraries working together as they do now, sharing staff and collections and services for the benefit of all.

Second, we must provide better **access** to our building. One of the most important features of our expansion plans is to offer handicapped access to the children's department by means of an elevator. (This will benefit the adult department too, as an elevator will be far superior to the existing exterior ramp.) I have worked here long enough to see children grow up without being able to use **their own** children's library. Please think for a minute how that makes them feel.

Third, our library lacks features that would make it more **useful** for townspeople. We have no meeting room now; we plan to add a medium-sized meeting room, accessible from the outside whether the library is open or closed. We need to add more public computers. Surprisingly, the more people own and use computers and the Internet, the more our equipment is used, and the more our staff is asked to help find information. We now have no quiet reading or study areas, a valuable feature of libraries in today's hectic world.

Fourth, the **beauty** of the original library should be restored. When the building was expanded in 1967, the architect's plans called for an attractive addition that would enhance the original structure. Sadly, there was no Mr. Atwater to help out, and the town decided it could not afford to realize the architect's full vision. The simple and functional building that resulted has

served North Branford for 36 years, but it is time to go further. As well as adding to its size, we need to improve the **appearance** of our existing library.

Finally, our building plans ought to enhance **cooperation** with other organizations. The meeting room will provide valuable space for community groups, and for joint programs by the library and other community and government agencies. Study areas will allow for tutoring and small classes. One of the most exciting ideas we have discussed is the possibility of a North Branford History Room in part of the original Atwater Library. This would be supervised jointly by the library and the Historical Society, accessible when the library is closed by way of Atwater's original front door.

Space, access, usefulness, beauty, and cooperation: these things are what we need to carry Mr. Atwater's vision into a new century. As we celebrate the past today, help us also look to the future.

The Atwater Library : Sharing Memories

Judith Newbig, Library Board

Do you remember when Atwater became a drive-thru Library? In 1976, in June or July, a car drove through the wall of the basement on the North Street side of the building. At this time, the Library Board was without a Head Librarian and I was the Chairman of the Board of Directors. A call came into my home about 6:00 A.M., asking me to come down to the Library because of an emergency. The structural damage was enough to warrant immediate Board decisions. The Children's room was more than half closed off from use. Further inspection showed more damage, and the portion of the upper section of the Library on the North Street side had its books removed to relieve the weight on the damaged wall and floor of the building. It was quite a learning experience to find out the uniqueness of the structure of Library buildings. Due to the reduction in the useable area at Atwater, the Bookmobile became an essential resource for the patrons. By August of 1976, the repairs were completed and the Library was once more whole.

Mary E. Bigelow

Former member of the Library Board
of Directors and a past chairman

A short time after we moved to North Branford, we took our three children up to enroll at the Atwater Memorial Library. Mrs. Hazel Hill was librarian at the time. It was a hot summer afternoon in July and the library was fairly empty so I imagine that we all went in different directions to explore.

Mrs. Hill was sitting behind a desk reading and she didn't want to be disturbed. She told us to be quiet, even when we whispered to one another. Finally she suggested that we move to Killingworth.

We had come to Connecticut from New York City and for us it was an adventure to buy a home in North Branford. Who knew where Killingworth was? Not the Calvos!

Marie Calvo

I'm not sure that many of us at Center School really knew what it meant for us to be getting a library. But we did know that it would be wonderful and exciting. We had watched the lot between the Beers' house and Shuttz store change. First a giant hole, then brick walls that seemed to reach the sky. Every day we raced from school to see what was new.

The adults in town were very impressed with the "Dedication", complete with a visit from Governor Baldwin. But to the kids in Center School, the most important event was the grand race on the library's opening day. Everyone wanted to get that magic kids library card #1. After much argument, we agreed that the prize would go to the one that touched the front door first. We wisely decided not to end the race at the librarian's desk, as that probably would have resulted in our being told to leave.

Danny Hartigan ever after had the prized card #1. I had to settle for card #3. Who had card #2? I don't remember.

Suzanna Boyce Kolakowski

Do you remember "Curious Alice"? Alice was a Bookmobile which the Library Board borrowed from the State to help increase Library interest. The Bookmobile came at a time when the Libraries hours and days had been cut. "Curious Alice" was parked around Town or at the Libraries when they were closed. The Bookmobile was a success and brought in new patrons when it started to tour around Town stopping at designated places so that the public could use it. Once the route was established, residents looked forward to "Curious Alice" visits. The Library Board felt this outreach program was an essential part of the Library System and began to plan for the purchase of a Bookmobile for the Town. When "Curious Alice" left the town in July of 1974, there was about a four month gap before the new Bookmobile was delivered. This Bookmobile was part of the Library System for about five more years until it was sold due to increases in costs, deteriorating conditions and a decline in it's use.

Mary E. Bigelow

Former member of the Library Board
of Directors and a past chairman

For over 35 years, the North Branford Women's Club, GFWC, has been holding "Story Hour" in the Children's Library for 3 to 5 year old children. It's been a pleasant, fun task and one I personally have enjoyed very much for over 10 years.

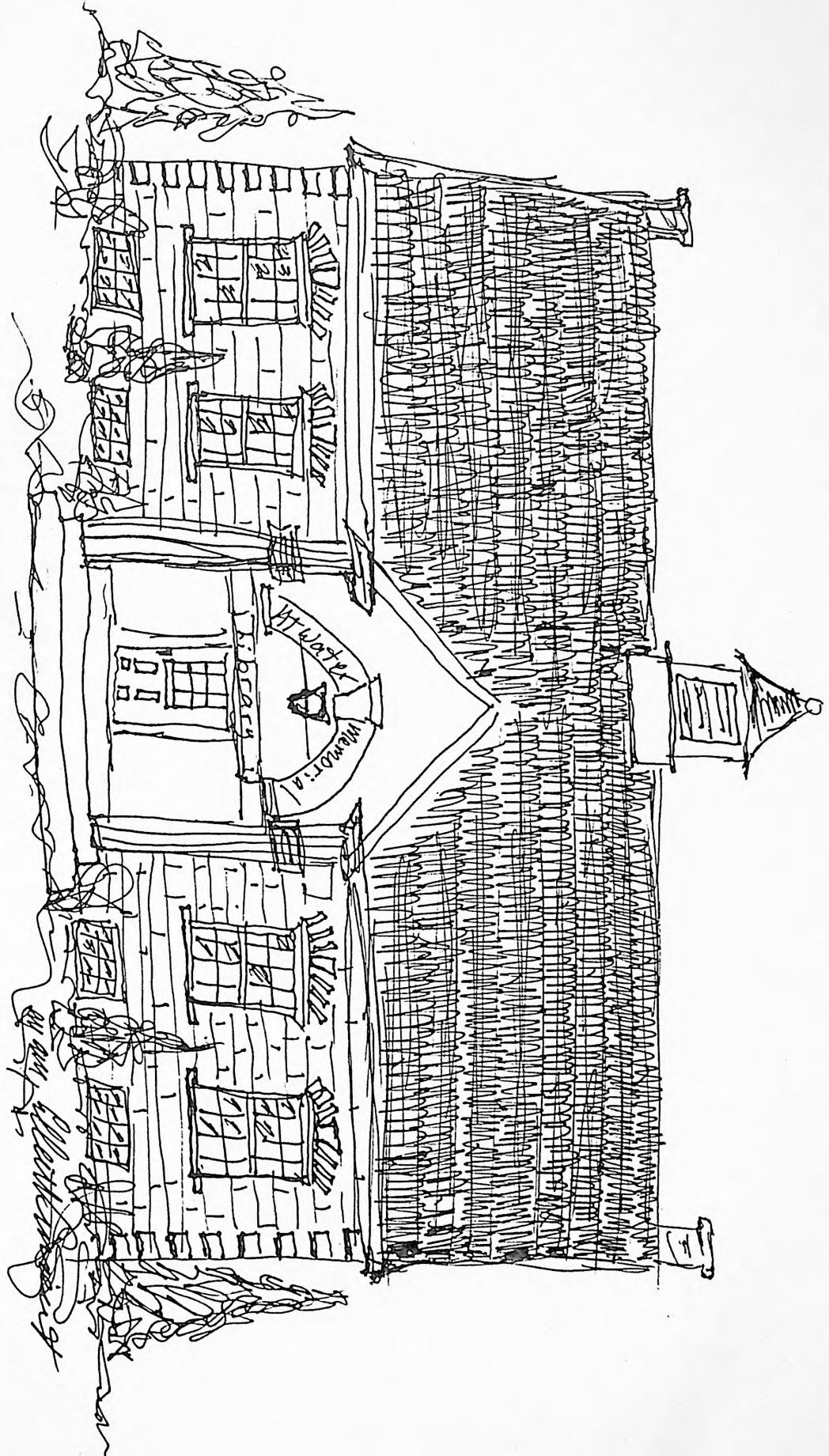
We read stories, do a craft, and play games. In the past, the Elephant Walk was a big hit. Holidays are celebrated with appropriate stories, crafts, and refreshments- even cranberry bread for Thanksgiving. This past January, we hosted a Beach Party. We had beach towels, a beach umbrella, and one of our members was dressed for the beach! Beach stories were read, a craft with beach sand was done, and then sand star cookies and juice were served.

We also have a Pillow Talk where everyone is encouraged to wear pajamas and bring a pillow and a Teddy Bear Story Hour that everyone is asked to bring- what else- a Teddy Bear!!

This fall we'll be doing Story Hour in the evening for all ages to accomodate parents who work.

The North Branford Women's Club would like to acknowledge Helen Glassen, the children's Librarian and thank her for her wonderful help, guidance, and enthusiasm.

Ginny Montelius



My sketching



Smith Library