

A photograph of the Beals Memorial Library building, a large, light-colored stone structure with a prominent portico supported by columns. The building is surrounded by green trees and a lawn. The text 'BEALS' is overlaid on a purple bar.

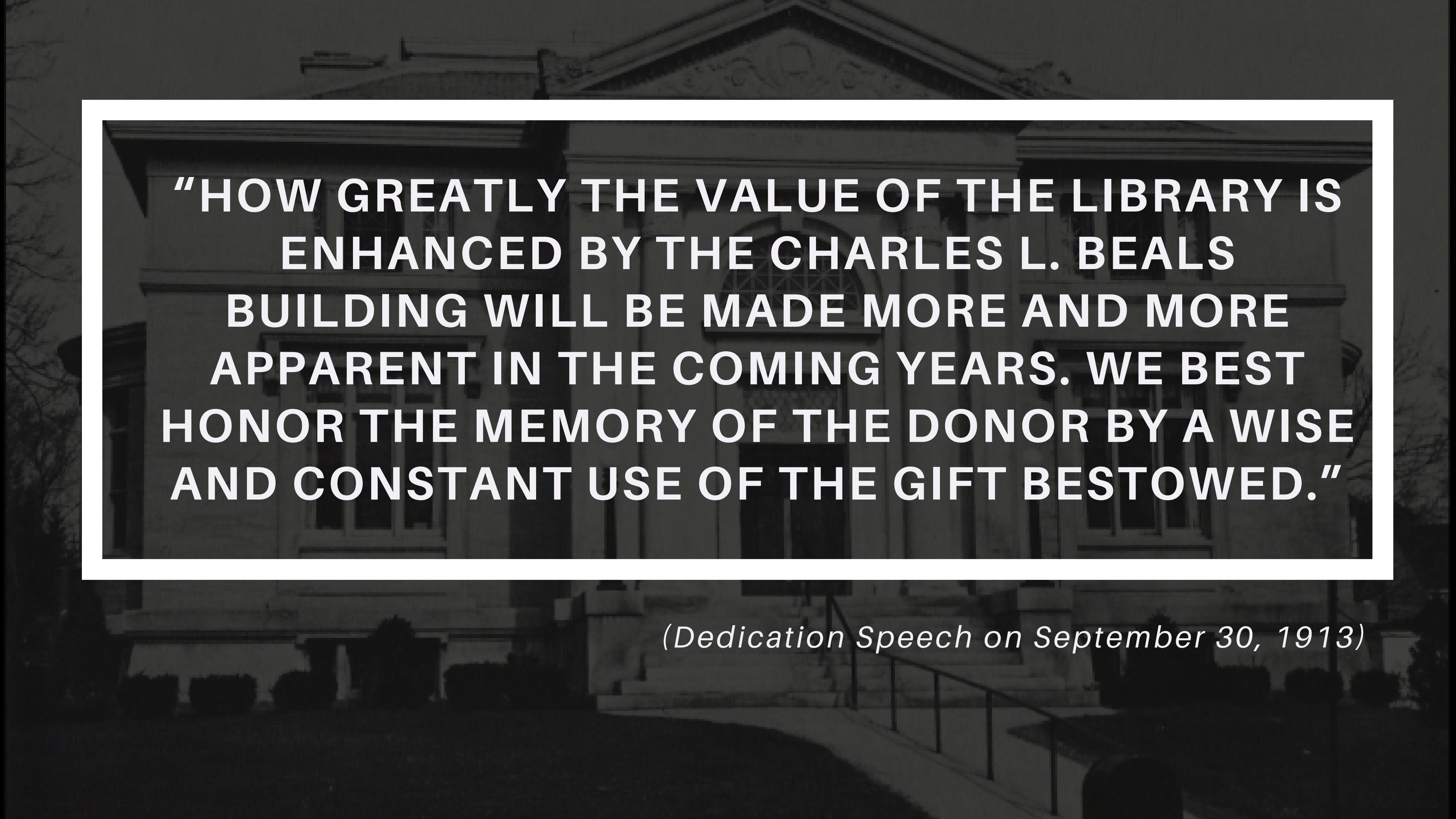
**BEALS**

**MEMORIAL**

**LIBRARY**

**SERVING WINCHENDON SINCE 1913**



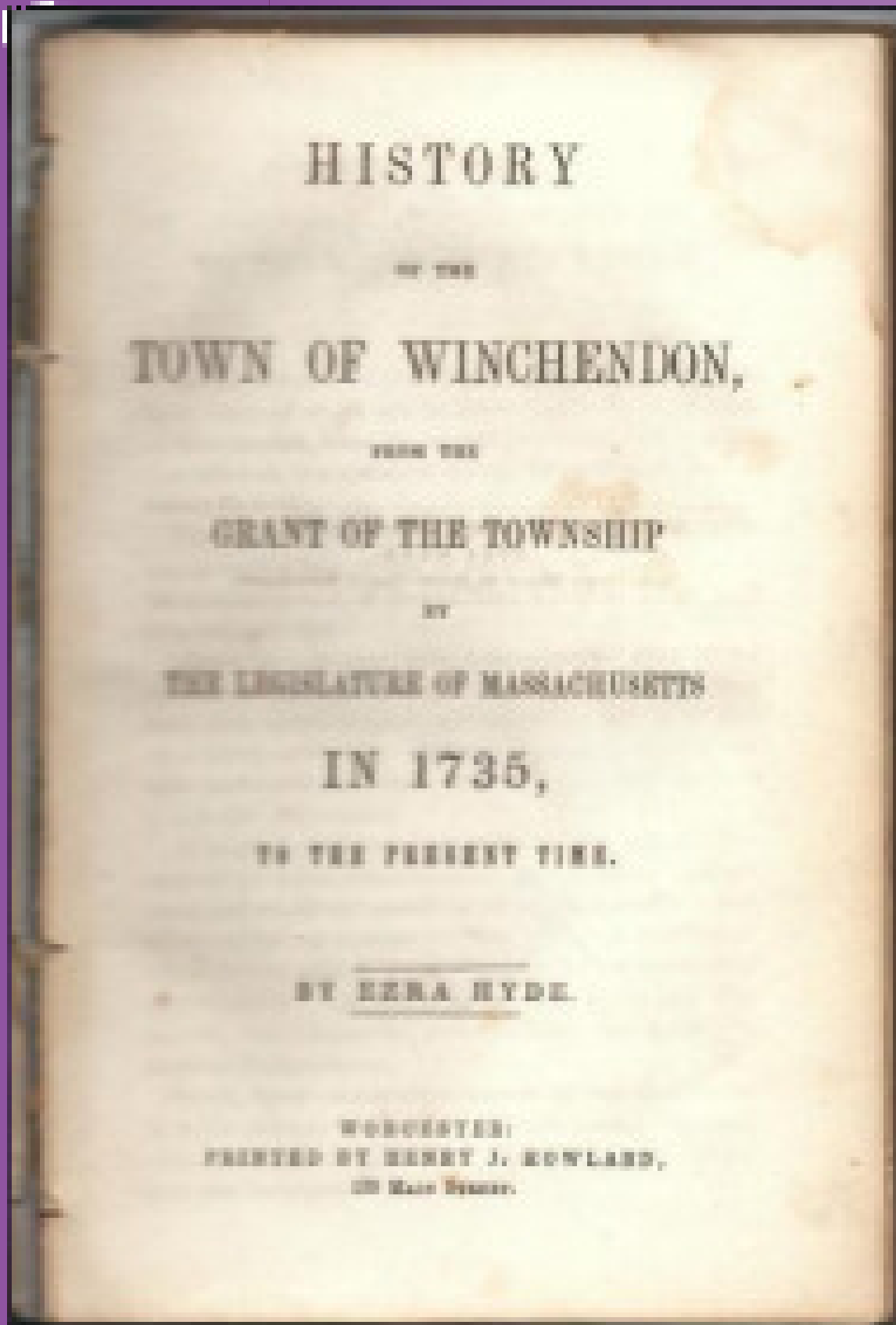


**"HOW GREATLY THE VALUE OF THE LIBRARY IS  
ENHANCED BY THE CHARLES L. BEALS  
BUILDING WILL BE MADE MORE AND MORE  
APPARENT IN THE COMING YEARS. WE BEST  
HONOR THE MEMORY OF THE DONOR BY A WISE  
AND CONSTANT USE OF THE GIFT BESTOWED."**

*(Dedication Speech on September 30, 1913)*

# Early Collection of Books

---



- In the late 1700's the first collection of books for circulation in Winchendon was kept at Old Centre by Deacon Joshua Smith and later by Mark Whitcomb.
- Around 1810-1825 there was a collection of some 175 volumes kept in the home of Ephraim Murdock on Front Street.
- Sometime between 1830 and 1835 another "library" was started and kept for many years under the care of Mr. Whitcomb. Although it contained between 200 and 300 volumes, after a period of usefulness it, like its predecessors, was sold at auction.

- There were other collections in town during the 1800s such as small school district libraries, an agricultural library and Sunday school libraries. However, it wasn't until 1850 that the movement for a more permanent library would begin.



# Beginnings of a More Permanent Library

---

- The drive for a permanent library was ignited by a lecture on "Reading" given by Rev. A. P. Marvin on the evening of Dec. 6, 1850 in the hall of the Winchendon Academy. He closed his lecture calling for a library to provide "a fountain of improvement and of happiness; an inexhaustible spring of the purest, richest nutriment for the immortal minds of the youth of this generation, and of the many generations that are to come."
- At the close of the lecture it was proposed to organize a literary association, which was named the "Winchendon Scientific and Literary Association". The group raised \$300 by subscription to purchase books and bookcases. Over the years, the library was housed in various locations on Front and Central Streets.
- In March, 1867, upon vote of the Literary Association, the library passed into possession of the Town of Winchendon. At this time the library contained about 1,500 volumes. The library was moved into the A. B. Smith block on Front Street and Mrs. Lucy Poland (above) was appointed the town's first librarian. The wife of local businessman Mr. Wheeler Poland, she would serve as librarian until 1877 years.



# Library Looking for a Home

---

- Fire in 1876 burned part of the library in the Smith block and destroyed several hundred volumes. The library was moved to the new engine house (most recently the former police station on Pleasant Street). Some 10 years later, in 1887, the library moved to Town Hall (center of first floor pictured below right) and located in the room that is currently the Town Clerk's office with a Reading Room facing the street.
- Because of overcrowding in the Town Hall, in 1891 a request was made at town meeting to appropriate \$10,000 for the building of a public library. The motion was defeated
- In 1901, trustees of Murdock Fund voted to offer former home of E. Murdock, Jr. (then the Unitarian parsonage) to the Town for a library. Townspeople voted to accept the offer, but church members were not in agreement and the offer was withdrawn.
- In 1907 the Town bought a lot on the corner of Central and Summer Streets (current property of Clark Memorial YMCA) for \$4,000 to be used for a library.
- The library remained in the overcrowded Town Hall until 1913.





# Charles L. Beals

*Library Benefactor*

**1835 - 1911**

---

- Graduate of Philips Academy in 1855
- A Civil War Veteran in 1860
- Very active in Winchendon.
- Was the Secretary and Treasurer of the Winchendon Savings Bank.
- Donated \$25,000 in 1909 for the library in memory of his wife, Harriet Martha Beals.
- In 1910, purchased land on Pleasant Street, former residence of E. Murdock Jr, for \$4,000 for the library site.
- Sadly, Mr. Beals wasn't able to see the result of this donation.



# Birth of Winchendon's Public Library

1907

The library trustees appealed to Andrew Carnegie for a grant. He offered \$12,500 for a new library building. It was voted at town meeting to ask Mr. Carnegie for \$25,000 for a more suitable building. He refused to increase the offer.

1909

A Special town meeting was called on June 5, 1909, at which a letter from local businessman Mr. Charles L. Beals was read offering \$25,000 to the town for "a public library to be called the Beals Public Library in memory of my wife, Hattie M. Beals, and George L. Beals and family." The offer was graciously accepted by the town.

1910

At the 1910 town meeting, Mr. Beals offered to purchase land on Pleasant street at the former residence of E. Murdock, Jr. and, later, Unitarian parsonage for the library site. It was felt that the lot bought by the town in 1907 on the corner of Central and Summer Streets was not suitable – too much traffic and noise. The town accepted his offer and voted \$5,000 for the foundation of the new library and grading of the grounds.



# Building the Library Timeline

1908

Mr. Beals gifted \$25,000 to the town for a the library.

March 1910

Town Meeting accepted Mr. Beals Offer to purchase land on Pleasant Street for \$4,000

May 1910

Town officially votes for the library to be located on Pleasant Street.

September 1910

Building Plans of the library were accepted.

March 1913

Town voted \$2,500 for furnishes for the library

1912

Electrical equipment contacts confirmed.

Late Fall 1910

Construction started on the foundation.

October 1910

Contractors and builders were confirmed.

September 30, 1913

Dedication and Opening of the library.



# Formal Dedication of the Beals Memorial Library

---



- The Beals Memorial Library was dedicated on Tuesday, September 30, 1913, before a capacity audience at Town Hall. Following presentation of the library keys by the selectmen to the trustees and a series of speeches, a dedicatory prayer was offered on the steps of the new library.
- The new building was 70 X 60 feet, made of Indiana limestone with granite trimmings, containing a reading rooms, reference room, stackroom, meeting space, and auditorium, and mahogany finish throughout. It housed 10,850 books.
- Total cost of the library was \$32,300.

- Sadly, Mr. Charles L. Beals would never see the result of his generosity. To honor him the name of the library was changed from Beals Public Library to Beals Memorial Library

# FORMAL DEDICATION OF THE BEALS MEMORIAL LIBRARY



TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1913

Speakers: Ex-Gov. John D. Long of Hingham, Warren F. Gregory of Boston, Prof. H. S. Cowell of Ashburnham

The Beals Memorial library, made possible by the gift of the late Charles Leavitt Beals, was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies on Tuesday afternoon. The exercises were held at the town hall at half after two o'clock with this

## Program

PIANO SELECTION  
Ballad in A flat *Chopin*  
Mrs. Elmer E. Pierce

INVOCATION  
Rev. Charles Ernest White

PRESENTATION OF KEYS  
Elisha M. Whitney  
for the building committee  
Selectman Charles M. Day  
for the town

ACCEPTANCE  
Dr. John G. Henry for the Trustees

ADDRESS  
Ex-Gov. John D. Long of Hingham

PIANO SELECTION  
March from Tannhauser *Wagner*

REMARKS  
Warren F. Gregory  
*of the Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., Boston*

POEM  
Written by James Raymond Perry, Chicago  
Read by Mrs. Murdock M. Clark

REMARKS  
Principal Hervey S. Cowell  
*of Cushing Academy, Ashburnham*

PIANO SELECTION  
Gipsy Rondo *Haydn*

ON THE LIBRARY STEPS AT FOUR-THIRTY

DEDICATORY PRAYER  
Rev. Joseph F. Fielden of Fitchburg

## Lines Written for the Dedication of the Beals Memorial Library

When men build fabrics out of brick and stone  
Assembling in them books of many kinds  
That hold the treasured thinking of our day  
As well as treasured thoughts of other times,  
A noble work is done, or, rather say,  
A noble work is started. Brick and stone  
When fashioned into architectural form,  
Great tomes where knowledge deeply buried lies,  
The lighter volumes that depict romance,  
The splendid pages where the poets' thought  
Is luminous with "jewels, five-words-long"—  
As Tennyson so finely imaged it—  
"That on the stretch'd forefinger of all Time  
Sparkle forever!"—these, all these, are but  
The brave foundation for some finer thing.  
This solid edifice, and all these books,  
Are but an empty show, an idle dream,  
Unless the volumes that are gathered here  
Yield up their treasures to the human mind.

But when, in days to come, the living mind  
Shall gather inspiration from the thought  
So amply stored within these silent tomes;  
When young invention, spurred by what it reads,  
Shall gain fresh impulse and create new things;  
When Youth shall delve into these golden mines  
And come forth laden with their richest lore;  
When all the inspiration of great deeds  
Recorded in the histories of men;  
When all the charm of wise Philosophy;  
When all the fascinations of Romance  
And all the glory of the poets' rhymes  
Shall work their wonder, then—but not till then—  
Will have been reared the finer fabric here.

No doubt the donor of this generous gift  
Had some such vision dimly in his mind,  
And felt that when that other fabric rose  
In airy grace above these solid walls,  
Invisible, but fair to Fancy's eye,  
That then, indeed, would be erected here

A true and fine memorial to her  
in memory of, whom this gift was made—  
A true and worthy monument to one  
Who ever loved the pure and lofty things  
Above the mean and sordid things of life.  
Loved things that made for beauty and for art,  
For music and for poetry and song,  
And all the noble passions of the soul.

—James Raymond Perry



# Beals Library Directors

Mrs. Wheeler Poland  
1867-1877

Mrs. Sylvia Manzer  
1887-1917

Georgia Farnumn  
1917-1918

Cecil J Bancroft  
1918-1919

Ida J Knight  
1919-1923

Anna G. Rockwell  
1924-1929

Mr. Leslie Arnold  
1929-1942

Abbie Stinson  
1942-1955

Lillie Holman  
1955-1977

Julia White-Cardinal  
1979-2014

Brian Tata  
2015-2016

Manuel King  
2016-Present

# Interesting Facts about the Beals Library

1

In 1914, George C. Beals gave a Chickering grand piano for the library's auditorium in memory of his mother. The piano remains in the auditorium and is still used today.

2

For many years, the library served as home for the Winchendon Women's Club (1913-2002) for meetings and activities. The club was the first organization to meet in the library on October 3, 1913.

3

When the library first opened the hours were Monday-Friday:  
3-5pm & 7-9pm  
Saturday & Sunday: 2-5pm.  
No books were allowed to be checked out on Sundays.

4

Established in 1930, the Winchendon Historical Society (now the Winchendon History & Cultural Center) used the library for many years for meetings and exhibits. They moved to their location on Front Street in 2000.

5

The first official library Book Club was formed in 1930. Named The Lecture-Book Discussion Group.

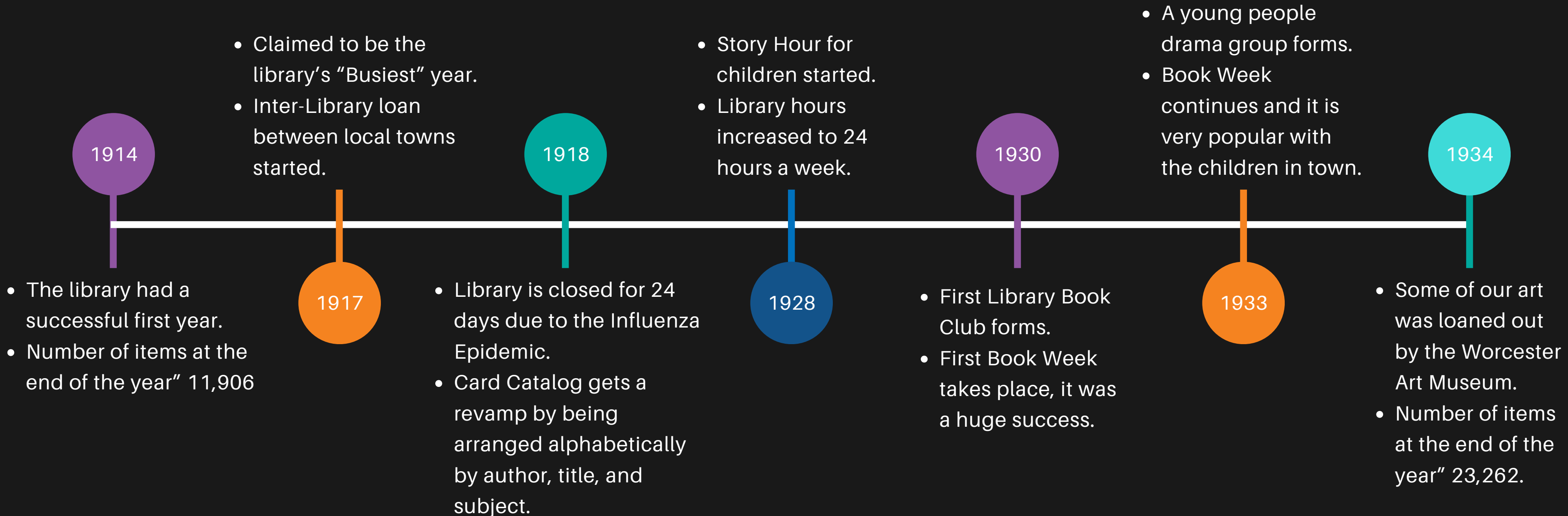
6

The longest serving librarian in town's history was Julia White-Cardinal who held the position from 1979 to 2014.



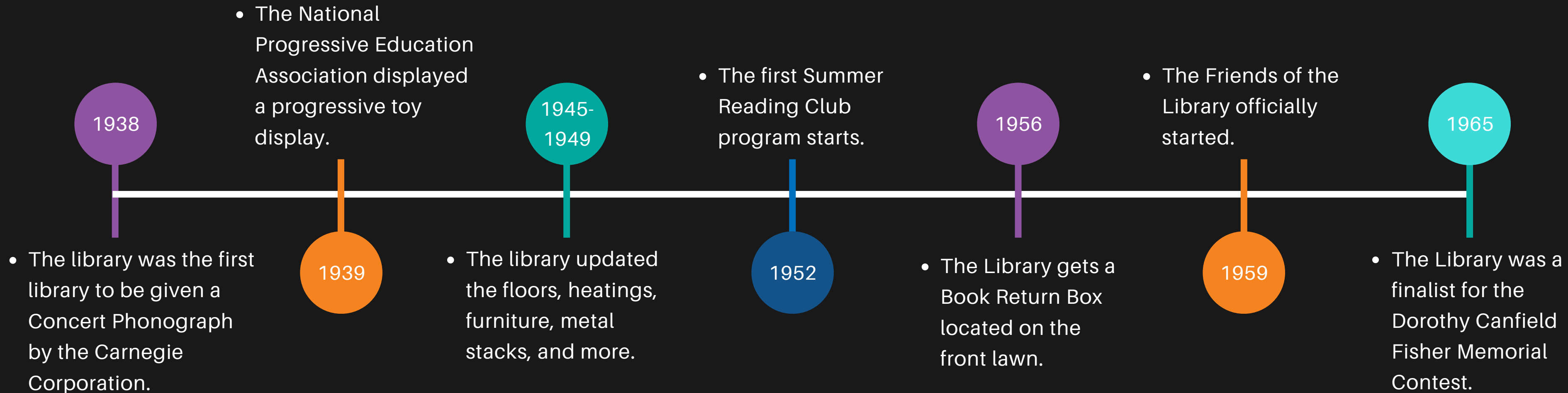
# A Brief Look at Library through the Years

1914-1934



# A Brief Look at Library through the Years

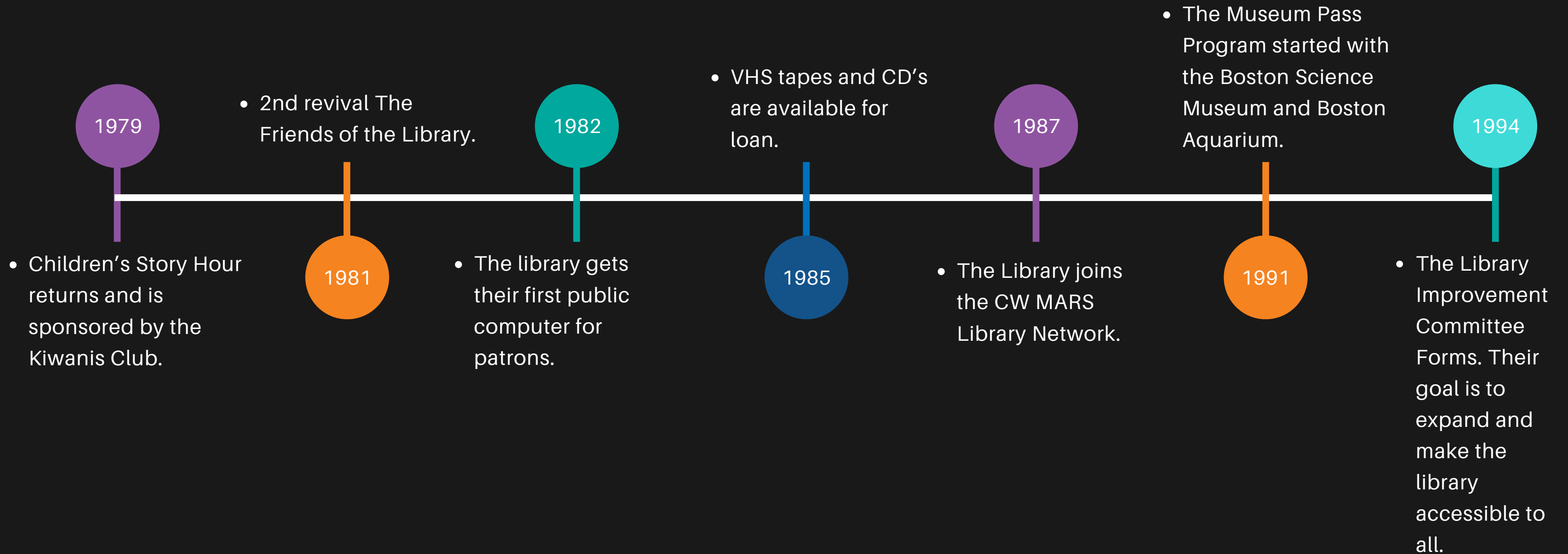
1935-1965





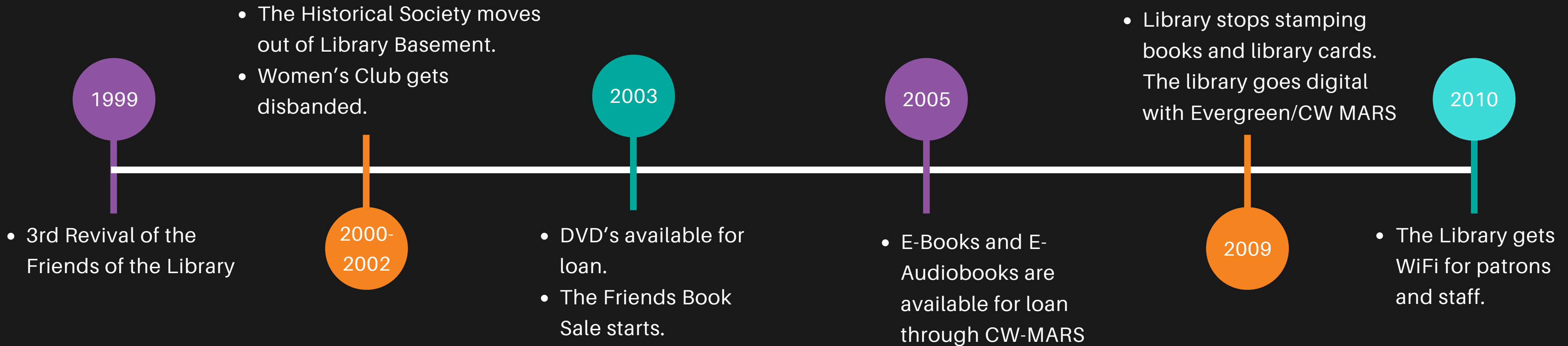
# A Brief Look at Library through the Years

1967-1994



# A Brief Look at Library through the Years

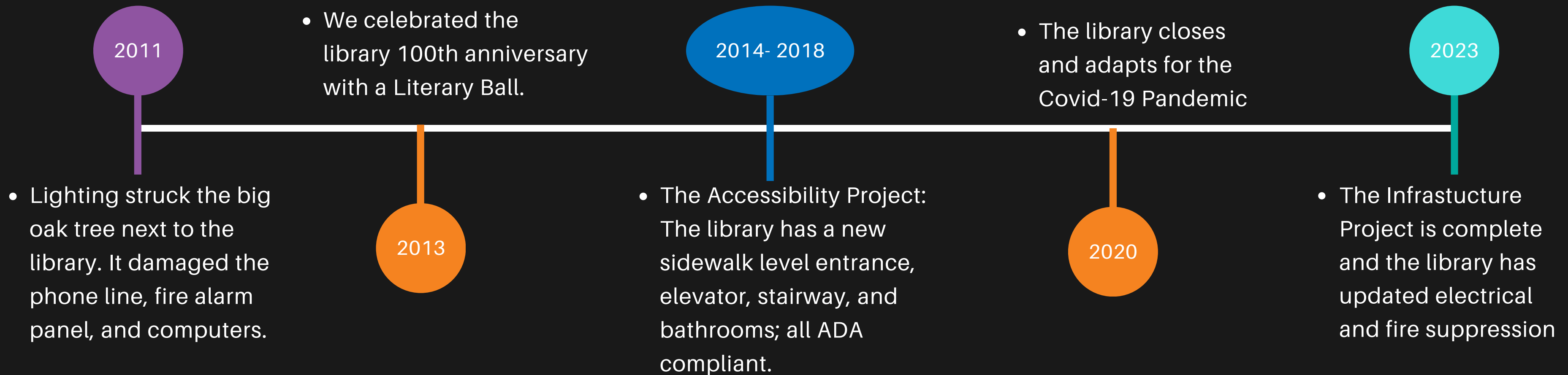
1995-2010





# A Brief Look at Library through the Years

2011-2023



# THE FRIENDS OF THE BEALS MEMORIAL LIBRARY

**The Friends of the Library promote, encourage and support the educational and cultural programs at the Beals Memorial Library.**

The Friends of the Beals Memorial Library volunteer their time to support Winchendon's public library. Through book sales and special events we raise funds to support library programs, purchase new furniture and items for the collection. We also work to engage the community in raising positive public awareness through advocacy for the library.

## A Brief History of the Friends

**1931**

Discussion to start a Friends of the Library started.

**1951**

The Friends of the Library officially started.  
Pauline Dame: Chair  
Donovan Jones: Trustee  
Rep  
Phyllis Thayer: Treasurer  
Priscilla Mints: Secretary

**1981**

Volunteers revived the Friends of the library and it stayed strong for a few years.

**1999**

Third times is a charm. The Friends group gets revived again and is still providing valued support today.

### Past Fundraisers

- Wine Raffle Basket
- Daddy Daughter Dance
- Escape Room
- Scratch Ticket Raffle
- Plant Sales
- Indoor Yard Sales
- Other Raffle Baskets

### Current Fundraisers

- Book & Media Sale
- Bake Sales





# With Deep Appreciation & Thanks

We want to express our gratitude to everyone who has helped us over the past 110 years. Without you, the Library would not thrive. We are eager for the bright future that lies ahead. Cheers to 110 more years.

## Research Sources:

“History of the Town of Winchendon” by Reverend A. P. Marvin (1868)  
“Winchendon Years 1764 – 1964” by Lois Stevenson Greenwood (1970)  
Winchendon Town Reports 1909-2022  
Winchendon Courier 1900-1929