

Main Library Expansion Project

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Existing Conditions Report and Preservation Recommendations

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Main Library Expansion Project
Cambridge, Massachusetts

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INTRODUCTION

This report was prepared by Ann Beha Architects as part of the Conceptual Design Phase of the Main Library Expansion Project for Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The current library opened its doors to the public in 1889. It was designed by the architect Henry Van Brunt in the Richardsonian Romanesque style on land donated to the city by the philanthropist, Frederick H. Rindge. An important landmark from the beginning, the library and the services it provides have evolved to reflect the growth and change of the City of Cambridge. As a response to this evolution, the original building has been altered and enlarged. In general, care has been taken to preserve its architectural character through these changes. Additions were made to the north of the main block by Van Brunt and Howe in 1894 and 1902, and a new wing was added to the west of the original library in 1967. The building now serves as the main library in a city-wide library. In recognition of its historic and architectural significance, the building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

At this time, another major expansion is being planned. This report anticipates a scope of work for the building's restoration and incorporation into an expanded facility. An informed understanding of the original building and the role it has played in the life of the community will ensure that the historic building remains a vital part of the new library.

PROJECT TEAM

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1.0 History of Existing Building

1.1 Introduction

The Cambridge Public Library is an historic landmark with recognized architectural significance. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Since 1889, the central branch of the library system, the building has played an important role in the life of the community. This is particularly true given the library's location at the heart of the city's high school campus. Although this summary will focus on the development of the historic structure, the history of the library is integral with that of the site. Like the Library, the development of the site has taken on numerous adaptations, each reflecting the urbanization and growing complexity of Cambridge.

1.2 Frederick H. Rindge, Benefactor

Through the middle of the 19th century, the land between Broadway and Cambridge Street was open woods or fields.¹ Benefactor Frederick H. Rindge later reminisced, "On what is now the Public Library common I used to play ball and climb the hawthorn for its berries."² Twenty years later, an 1873 atlas indicates that the intermediate streets had been laid out and 19 lots delineated on the block bounded by Broadway and Cambridge, Irving and Trowbridge Streets, though no buildings had been constructed on them.

The development of the site was typical of activity in Cambridge during the mid-to-late-19th century, transforming it "from a collection of villages into a compact municipality."³ The 1880's saw increased prosperity and new construction, coupled with "a new community spirit, which expressed itself in a concern for building schools, libraries and civic buildings."⁴ The public library, which had begun life in 1851 as the Cambridge Athenaeum on Main and Pleasant Streets, had become overcrowded by this time. The Library Trustees began to talk of finding an appropriate site for a new building in 1883 and, in 1887, Mayor William E. Russell appointed a committee "to appeal to the wealthier residents to help finance the construction of the building."⁵

On June 14, 1887 Frederick H. Rindge responded to the appeal by offering to give the City approximately two-and-a-half acres of land, bounded by Cambridge, Trowbridge, Broadway and Irving Streets and "to build thereon and give to said city a Public Library Building."⁶ Rindge had inherited an estate valued at \$3 million that included title to the site after the sudden death of his father, Samuel Rindge, in 1883. As he relocated to Los Angeles, Rindge took it upon himself to provide the kind of charitable contributions "which his father had been unable or unwilling to make in his own lifetime."⁷ The Library was one of three buildings donated by Rindge to the City during the same period, the others being City Hall and the Manual Training School, located across Irving Street from the Library. Rindge also made contributions toward the building of the Harvard-Epworth Church. Like the Library, all were designed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. The Manual Training School, completed in 1888 to the designs of Rotch & Tilden, was a particularly sympathetic neighbor to the Library, with an arched entrance and flanking round turrets and executed in brick and Longmeadow brownstone. These two building formed the nucleus of the present educational campus.



Site Plan, 1889



View of Cambridge Public Library and Manual Training School with Memorial Hall tower in the distance, 1889



View of Memorial Hall, 1870



Gore Hall, Showing Book Stack Addition, 1876



Dedham Public Library, 1886

1.3 Henry Van Brunt, Architect

Following Rindge's offer, a competition was held in September of 1887 for the design of the new library. Little is known about the submissions or the selection process, but the architects included some of the leading firms in the northeast - McKim, Mead and White, Peabody and Stearns and Van Brunt & Howe - as well as lesser-known local firms Chamberlin & Whidden and William Wentworth. The designs were reviewed by Rindge himself, who selected the designs of Van Brunt & Howe.

Henry Van Brunt (1832-1903) was one of the leading architectural designers and theorists in the United States during the latter half of the 19th century. *American Architect and Building News* lauded him as "one of the most accomplished artists who ever practiced in this country."⁸ With William Ware, Van Brunt had designed the flamboyant Victorian Memorial Hall in 1865-78, whose tower once dominated the view from the Cambridge Library site. In 1885, Van Brunt formed a partnership with Frank Howe of his office, who set up an office in Kansas City in order to design stations for the Union Pacific Railroad. Though he moved to Kansas City two years later, Van Brunt continued to be active in architectural affairs on a national scale, publishing essays and criticism in popular periodicals, translating the *Discourses on Architecture* by French architect and theoretician Viollet-le-Duc and serving as one of the chief architects of Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition.

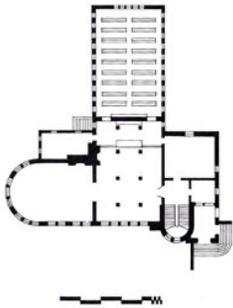
By the time of the Cambridge Public Library commission, Van Brunt had gained a reputation as an innovative designer of libraries. The free public library was a relatively new institution, which had emerged in the United States during the middle of the 19th century.⁹ The earliest designs drew on historic precedents for private or university libraries, but by 1881, the American Library Association had voted "that in the opinion of the Association, the time has come for a radical modification of the prevailing-typical style of library building and the adoption of a style ... better suited to economic and practical utility."¹⁰ Their vote had been inspired in part by Van Brunt, who had addressed the Association at their national conference in Boston in 1879:

Doubtless, we made a false start by endeavoring to adapt our large public collections to the traditional and architectural library halls, surrounded by chapel-like alcoves, in several stories ... The purposes for which our own public libraries are established are new to the world of literature and books and naturally affects the questions under consideration.¹¹

Van Brunt most likely was referring to H.H. Richardson's designs for the Winn Memorial Library in Woburn (1877-78), the Ames Memorial Library in North Easton (1877-79) and the Crane Memorial Library in Quincy (1880-83). All followed the "traditional style" by encasing the reading room in book-lined alcoves. Although Van Brunt held these buildings in high regard architecturally, he joined librarians in criticizing them as a model for library planning. In the words of Justin Winsor, superintendent of the Boston Public Library and a client of Van Brunt, libraries such as Richardson was designing were "planned to produce the largest rather than the smallest distance of books from the point of delivery" and exhibited the "inability of architects to recognize the paramount demands of administrative uses over the meretricious attractions of vista of books and displayed alcoves."¹² Twelve foot high shelves



East Saginaw Public Library, 1888



East Saginaw Public Library Plan, 1888



Cambridge Public Library, 1889

architecturally arranged within alcoves and balconies, such as those at Woburn, made it difficult for librarians to access and deliver books. With the demands of an increasingly avid, but not yet self-reliant, public, librarians called for a plan based more on function than form.

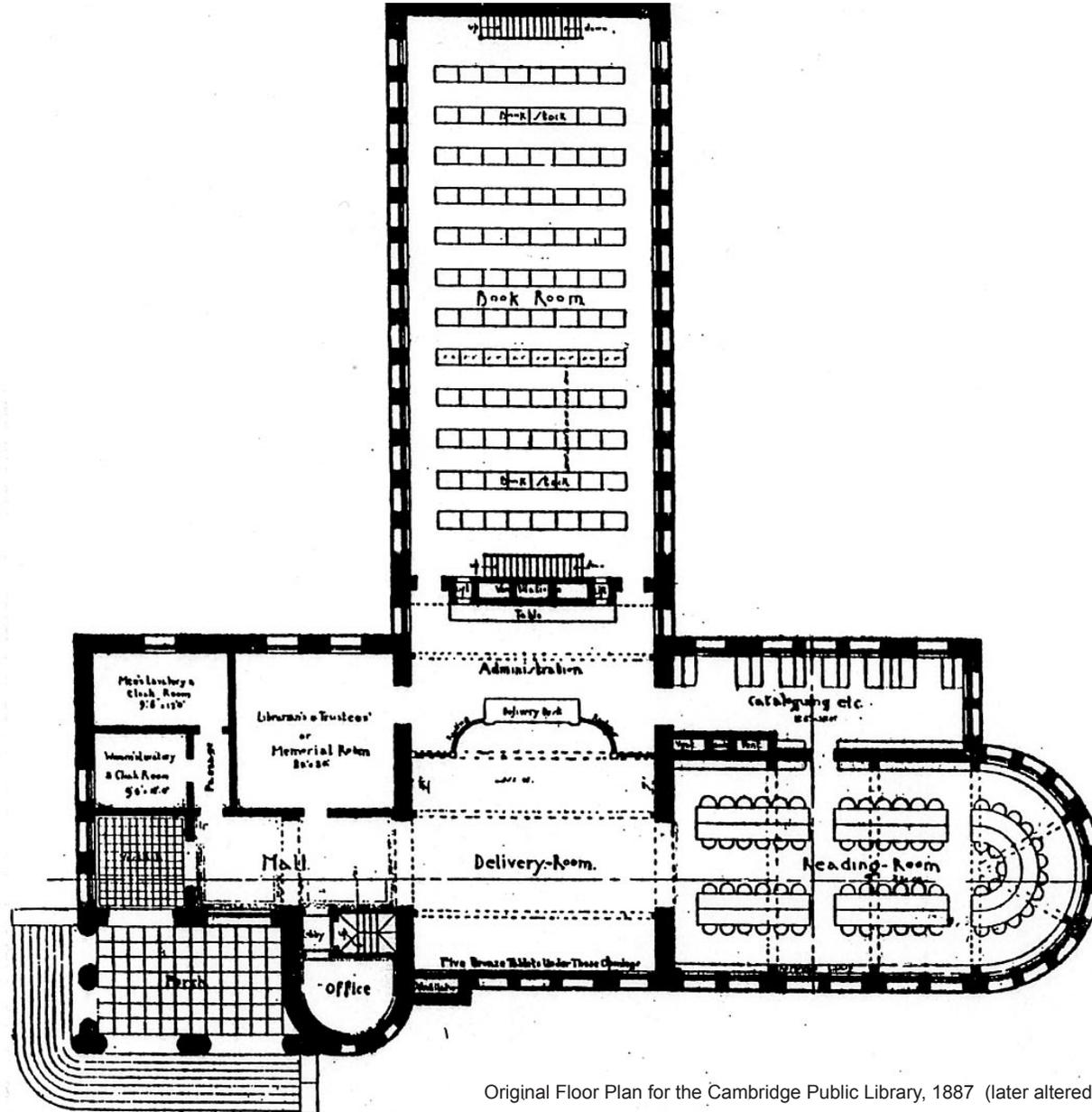
Van Brunt collaborated with Winsor earlier to develop an alternative to the “traditional” library. In 1876, they erected an addition to Gore Hall at Harvard. Here the bookshelves were segregated from the reading rooms of the library in an independent structure devoted to storage, prefiguring the metal book stacks of libraries built through the beginning of the next century. As would be the case at Cambridge, the book room at Gore Hall consisted of several levels of stacked metal shelving into which both the roof structure and floor levels were integrated. The result, as Van Brunt described it, was a compact, fireproof and expandable system corresponding to the librarian’s need to efficiently store, catalogue and access a continuously growing collection.

Van Brunt went on to deploy this strategy in his public libraries. The first use of the metal stack system in a public library was probably Van Brunt’s Statehouse Library at Topeka, Kansas in 1883.¹³ In his subsequent libraries at Dedham, Massachusetts (1886), East Saginaw, Michigan (1888) and Cambridge (1889), the placement of the book stack wing perpendicular to a series of public rooms crystallized into an articulate massing strategy. In these examples, the front of the building consisted of a sequence of public spaces integrating the entry, book delivery room (where patrons addressed their requests to the librarian) and reading rooms. While the exterior of these libraries emulated Richardson’s architectural compositions, the overall organization reflected Van Brunt’s innovative planning. Establishing a formal expression of a functional library was important to Van Brunt and grew out of his collaboration with librarians but also reflected his desire (so often expressed in his writings) to establish the foundations of legitimate architectural form.

Among Van Brunt’s public libraries, Dedham and Cambridge are the best preserved. In both cases, the original elevations and public spaces are relatively intact, and the original metal book stacks are still in use. In contrast, the Topeka Library was demolished in the 1960’s and the library in East Saginaw has been extensively renovated. While maintained as a library, the East Saginaw book stack was eliminated in the 1920’s.

1.4 The Cambridge Public Library - Initial Design and Construction (1887-1889)

Plans for the Cambridge Public Library were first published in the *Cambridge Chronicle* in 1887. The entrance dominated the southwest corner of the building, with a “Mall” leading into the Delivery Room, dramatically on axis with the apse of the Reading Room. The book stacks were accessed immediately behind the circulation desk of the Delivery Room. Opening off the Mall were “Men’s and Women’s Cloak Rooms” and a “Librarian’s and Trustees or Memorial Room.” The desire for a larger Memorial Room later led to the decision to move the cloakrooms and toilets to the basement and second floor, respectively, and to move the entrance one bay in toward the tower. As a result, in the final plan, the stair in the tower was made grander.



Original Floor Plan for the Cambridge Public Library, 1887 (later altered)



Delivery Room, 1889



Reading Room, 1889



Cambridge Room, 1889

The construction contract was awarded to L.D. Wilcutt, who also furnished the Dedham granite of the exterior, with carpentry by M.F. Tracey.¹⁵ Construction began in May of 1888, with the dedication on June 29, 1889.¹⁶ The Library opened to the public August 5th, 1889 and was declared by the Mayor to be “elegant, attractive and convenient within, ... stately and ornamental without, ... a noble and princely gift.”¹⁷

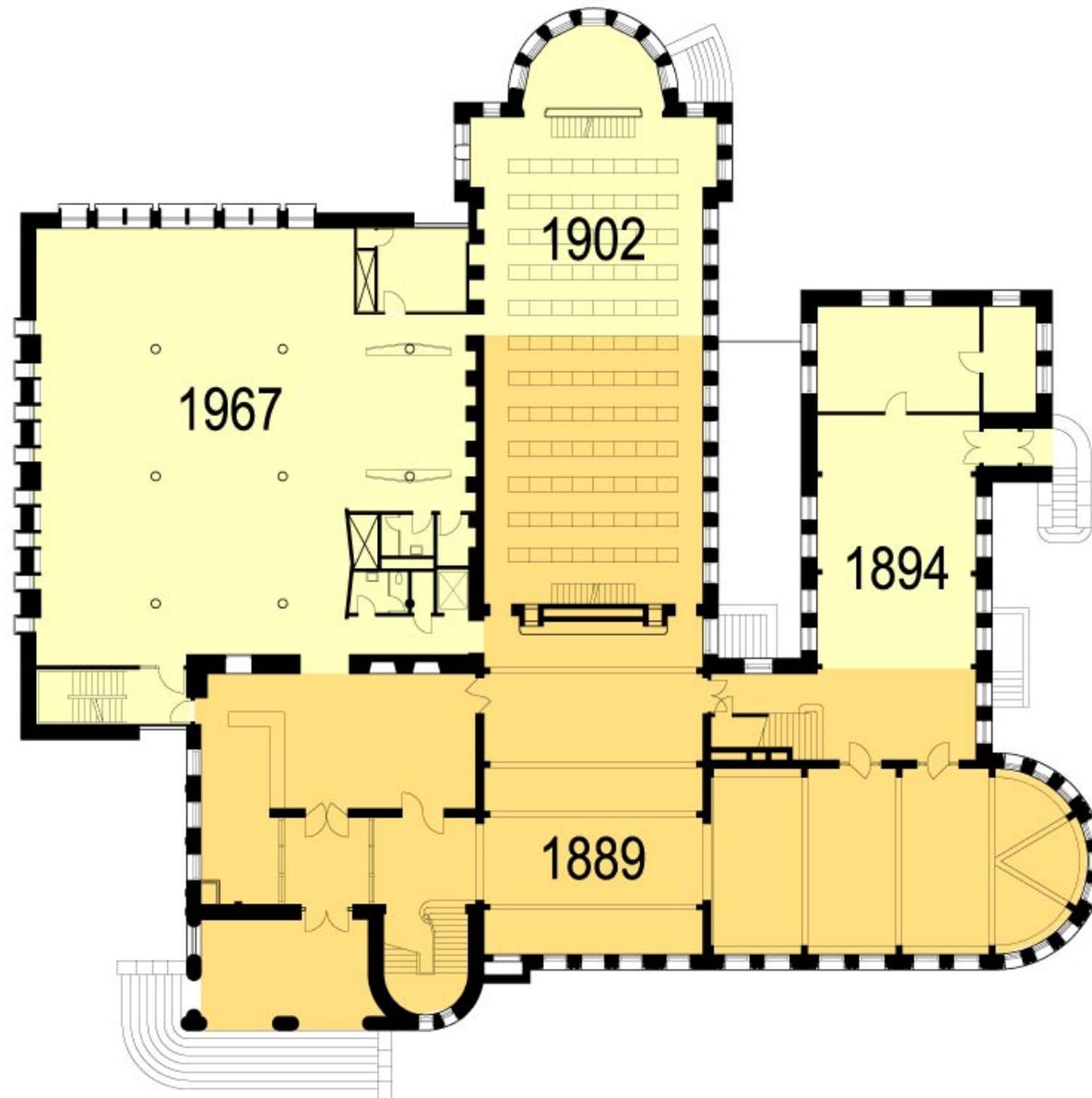
The new building was entered from a wide porch through a vestibule “furnished with tile floor and having attractive dadoes around the sides.”¹⁸ The Delivery Room in the center of the building was the major space, furnished with settees where patrons waited for books to be delivered from the stacks, the librarians’ desks behind a paneled rail, and handsome ceiling trusses. The wood paneled wainscot, doors and trusses were varnished ash and the coloring of the walls was described as “terra-cotta, old gold and olive green shades.”¹⁹ Views of the interior, photographed soon after the library opened, show the reading tables and carrels designed by the architect and documented in the original building drawings.

A central element in the decoration of the Library were marble tablets, which had been a condition of Rindge’s gift. Placed on the north wall above the delivery desk, where they would hold the gaze of waiting patrons, the tablets contained religious texts, which he hoped would inspire future generations. Rindge explained that “The attempt to make public buildings didactic is no novelty, as witness those of ancient Greece, Rome and Egypt. ... I have tried to place upon these new buildings in Cambridge sentences apt to their positions and such as all Christians could approve. Each is intended to assert a truth; and thus each building becomes in a sense a monument to truth.”²⁰

One of the unusual features in the new library was the creation of a reference library in the Reading Room. It contained standard reference works “freely accessible to the public, without the necessity of applying to any librarian, although the librarians are always glad to give information or guidance.” The concept was to foster “the habit of personal contact with books, and the process of seeking out, perhaps though many blunders, the information desired.” It was reported that, “The new arrangement has been highly appreciated by the public and no injury has, as yet been received by any of the books.”²¹

To the rear of the entrance and adjacent to the Delivery Room was located the Cambridge Memorial Room, intended to contain “historical and biographical memorials of our city and its sons.” The furnishings of the room were not completed by the opening of the building, and an appeal was issued to the community, with the following intent:

It is proposed to devote the outer room mainly to historical memorials, and books or manuscripts referring to the history of Cambridge, while the inner room will be devoted to the works of Cambridge authors and artists, including, it is hoped, many MS. memorials and portraits. It is not proposed to place in this room the memorials of the municipal history of Cambridge, or the portraits of those who have taken prominent parts in that, since for those memorials the new City Hall would seem the more fitting place.²²



Current First Floor Plan showing Building Evolution from 1889-1967

The second floor was originally devoted to a Ladies Cloak Room and Trustees Room. The newspaper reading room, originally designated as part of the reference room, was moved to the second floor Trustees Room soon after the building opened, “for quiet and freedom from interruption.”²³

Another feature in the new Library was extension of the hours of opening. All rooms in the building were fitted with combination gas and electric light fixtures, a common feature in the end of the 19th century when electricity was still gaining acceptance. Both the pendants hanging from the bottom of the trusses in the Delivery Room and the table lamps in the Reading Room had simple oval shades. A newspaper article written a month after the opening reported that “The electric lights in the new Public Library have been tried and, while they outdo the gas in regard to lighting the rooms, they are rather too brilliant, making it injurious to the eyes to read by them.”²⁴ By the time the Children’s Wing was added in 1894, the lampshades had been replaced.



Marble Tablets, Delivery Room, 1889



Children's Room, Interior View, 1894

1.5 Addition for Children’s Library (1894)

Within four years of its opening, the library began to evolve in response to an expanding program. In 1893, the Trustees requested funding for a new children’s reading room, an idea that received hearty support from the *Cambridge Tribune*:

Before all the money in the city is spent for children’s playgrounds, let it be remembered that the spot most dear to the children in all the city is the reading room of our public library. Visit it on a Saturday afternoon and see if it be not so. Crowded, two and three in a single chair, those little students of the magazines and illustrated weeklies show a contentment which would melt the heart of even a member of the finance committee of the city council, could he but see it.²⁵

The need to expand the library grew out of an ambitious and successful program for school-age children. The wing added to the north of the former cataloguing room was roughly the same size as the stacks. According to a report on state libraries issued in 1899:

The first floor contains a reading-room for children, a room for cataloguing and an office for the librarian. On the second floor is a room for the trustees, and also a special library, to which the public have access, comprising works on American local history and genealogy. In the basement of this wing space is provided for bound volumes of newspapers, which may be consulted.²⁶

The design was executed by Van Brunt and Howe and, while no original drawings have been located, the specifications indicate that “the new materials required in the construction of this work is to correspond exactly in color, quality and general character with the corresponding material in the present work.”²⁷ A recent inspection of the roof suggests that portions of the 1889 roof were stripped to provide slate for the addition. The specifications provide some insight into the design of the original Children’s Room as well as the Delivery and Reading Rooms:

All plaster wall surfaces throughout the new addition to the main building to be painted four coats in oil, varying in colors in the several rooms, according to patterns approved by the architects...archivolts of the arches are to be treated with different colors. The plaster work included between the two wood moldings of the cornice in the first story is also to be treated in a different color, and this contract is to allow for three border lines around each panel of the walls where required. The colors are to correspond to those in the present reading room. The plaster work of the ceilings in the new building to be thoroughly primed and to be tinted in distemper, according to patterns approved by the architects. Each panel of the ceiling to have four border lines. Colors to correspond with those in the old adjoining rooms.²⁸

The recent historic paint analysis provided by Building Conservation Associates has documented these original decorative paint schemes in tones of olive, burnt sienna and ochre.

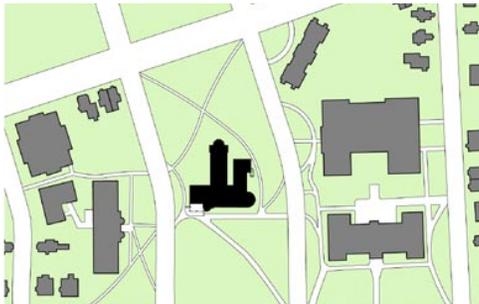
1.6 Addition to Stacks (1902)

Upon the completion of the library had come “an increase far beyond all anticipation of the public interest” in the institution.³¹ This had resulted in a significant growth in use of the library as well as donations of books to the collections. A report made ten years later by the state library board had predicted that the stacks “will require enlargement within a few years”³² and, in 1902, a second addition by Van Brunt & Howe doubled the length of the stacks to the dimensions envisioned in the original plans.³³ At the same time, a room was added at end of the stacks for school & branch book deliveries. The addition to the Stack Wing bore out the architect’s assertion that the metal book stack system could be easily extended.

1.7 Development of Adjacent High Schools (1892 - 1932)

The decades following the completion of the Library were marked by the construction of other public buildings in the immediate vicinity. English High School, designed by Chamberlain & Whidden, opened in 1892, and Latin High School, by Hartwell, Richardson & Driver, was finished in 1899. The city commissioned the Olmsted Brothers to design the planting for the English High School “to give the grounds an agreeably furnished, if not decorated appearance, and likewise to bring them somewhat into harmony with the grounds of the Public Library previously planted in a similar manner.”²⁹ The firm subsequently prepared plans for the new Latin School, designing the approaches to the new building “to relate to the approaches and plantations of the adjoining buildings, the High School, the Public Library and the Manual Training School, to the end that the whole group should constitute one whole.”³⁰

In 1925, Trowbridge Street was closed between Broadway and Cambridge Street and graded as part of the park.³⁶ In 1932, the Manual Training School was demolished for a new and significantly larger Technical School and a driveway with rail fence installed on the Irving Street right-of-way.³⁷



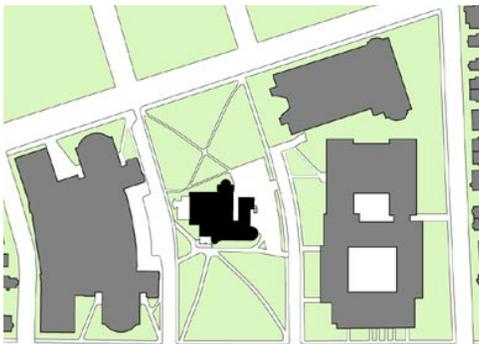
Site Plan, 1902



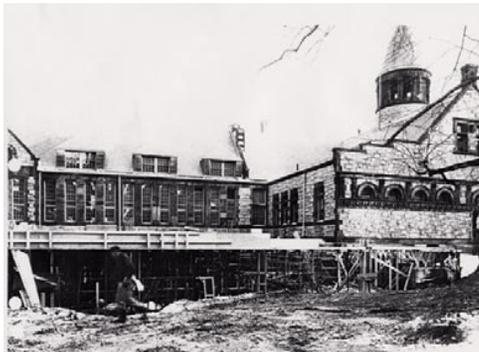
View of CPL with English and Latin High School, c.1902



View of Mural, Delivery Room, 2002



Site Plan, 1932



Addition Under Construction, 1967

1.8 Internal Changes (1932 - 1966)

The 1930's witnessed significant modifications to the Library. In 1934, as part of the Civilian Works Administration, murals were painted in the Reading Room and the Delivery Room. The artists, Arthur Wills Oakman and Elizabeth Tracy, worked under the direction of John David Hatch Jr., Assistant Director of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. The paintings filled the two lunettes or arches in the former Delivery Room and the lunette and half dome at the end of the Reference Room. The paintings in the Delivery Room depicted the symbols of the Dewey decimal system--philosophy, philology, sociology, religion, pure science and general works--while those in the Reference Room related to the history of printing, from ancient times through the first printing press in America, established at Harvard College in 1639.³⁴

As part of an Emergency Relief project in 1935, the original ground floor framing and wood floors of the Library were replaced with concrete framing and floor slabs. At the same time, steel windows were installed throughout the basement to replace the original wood sash.

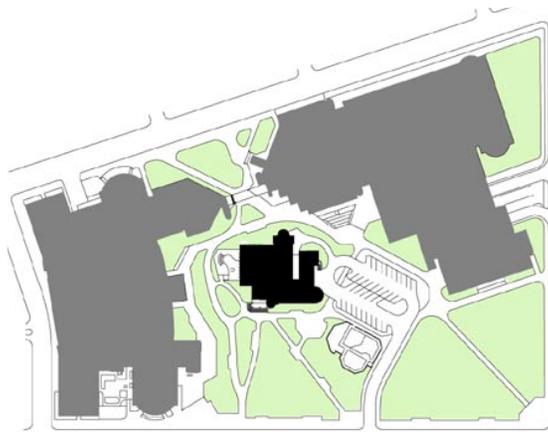
Minor changes continued to be made in the Library itself. Photographs from the 1950's show that fluorescent strip lights had been installed in the Delivery Room and the desk was relocated against the east wall. In the 1950's, the perimeter casework in the Children's Room was removed.

1.9 New Reference and Children's Room Addition (1967)

As soon as the Library had been completed, the Trustees had reported, "It is already obvious that our lower reference-room and waiting-room, large as they first seemed, are too small and must, as some future period, be enlarged."³⁸ However, it took nearly 80 years for these functions to be expanded.

Designs were prepared by the Boston firm of Shepley Bulfinch Richardson & Abbott, successors to the legacy of H.H. Richardson. They designed a three-story addition to the west of the stacks, containing a new children's library on the basement level, reference room on the first floor and administrative offices on the second floor. The exterior treatment was praised as "striking in its successful effort to blend modern materials and needs with an older building."³⁹ On the exterior, light colored brick and brownstone trim were selected to blend with the existing brownstone and granite. At the junction between the new and old buildings, glazed sections were inserted to further differentiate the two structures.

Unfortunately, the 1967 addition resulted in a significant loss of historic fabric. The addition was built along the west side of the Stack Wing, concealing the original facade



Site Plan, 1977-Present

blocking natural light into the stacks. Where new construction was joined to the older building, sections of carved brownstone trim was cut and removed. In contrast, the front of the 1889 building was little affected except that the original paneled wood front doors and transom were replaced with a set of aluminum doors and a single-light aluminum transom. Likewise, the most important interior spaces, such as the original Delivery and Reference Rooms were not significantly altered. However, the former Memorial Room was demolished and the space was re-configured to accommodate an expanded circulation desk. The original architectural millwork was removed. In the former Delivery Room, new flush paneling was added but the original wainscot was not affected. The modern lighting fixtures installed throughout the library do not complement the design of the historic rooms.

1.10 Rindge and Latin High School, 1977

In 1977, the Technical High School and the English and Latin High Schools merged. The subsequent building project to accommodate the new single institution altered the site plan surrounding the library. The outlines of both Irving and Trowbridge Streets were erased and access to the library from Cambridge Street was reduced. The sense of the library occupying a "Library Common" situated within a city block was compromised.

(Notes)

- ¹ H.F. Walling, Civil Engineer, "Map of Cambridge" (Boston: George L. Dix, 1854).
- ² *The Rindge Gifts to the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts* (Cambridge: By Order of the City Council, 1891), p. 15.
- ³ Gifford, W.L.R., "The Public Library" in *The Cambridge Chronicle Semi-Centennial Souvenir* (date?), p. 39.
- ⁴ Charles H. Sullivan and Susan E. Maycock, "The Cambridge Public Library," unpublished mss. (June 22, 1989), Cambridge Historical Commission, p. 1. See also Antoinette F. Downing, Elisabeth MacDougall and Eleanor Pearson, *Report Two: Mid-Cambridge, Survey of Architectural History in Cambridge* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge Historical Commission, 1967).
- ⁵ Gifford, p. 39 and Sullivan and Maycock, p. 1.
- ⁶ Free Public Library Commission, *4th Annual Report* (1899), pp. 66.
- ⁷ *The Rindge Gifts to the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts* (Cambridge: By Order of the City Council, 1891), p. 15 and Sullivan and Maycock, pp. 1-2. Rindge remarked that "It is easier for one who has inherited wealth to disburse it for public purposes than for one who has earned it by the sweat of body or brain ... My father's last illness was sudden and short; it prevented even testamental provisions such as I believe he would otherwise have made."
- ⁸ *American Architect and Building News* (Vol. LXXX, No. 1424 (April 11, 1903), p. 9).
- ⁹ Nikolaus Pevsner cites the library in Peterboro, New Hampshire, founded in 1833, as "the first public library ever" in *A History of Building Types* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 105.
- ¹⁰ William Fletcher, "Library Buildings" *American Architect and Building News* (Vol. XXIV, No. 675 (December 1, 1888), p. 136).
- ¹¹ William Fletcher, "Library Buildings" *American Architect and Building News* (Vol. XXIV, No. 675 (December 1, 1888), p. 136).
- ¹² Kenneth A. Breisch, *Henry Hobson Richardson and the Small Library in America* (MIT, 1997), p. 88.
- ¹³ William J. Hennessey, "The Architectural works of Henry Van Brunt," Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1979, p. 140-144.
- ¹⁴ Kenneth A. Breisch, *Henry Hobson Richardson and the Small Library in America* (MIT, 1997), p. 88.
- ¹⁵ *Cambridge Chronicle* (V. 43, May 12, 1888, p. 4 and July 6, 1889) at CHC .
- ¹⁶ A newspaper article dated August 11, 1888 reported that "the foundation has been completed several weeks and the walls are now nearly finished. "The Public Library" *Cambridge Tribune* (Vol. XI, No. 23), p. 1.
- ¹⁷ *The Rindge Gifts to the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts* (Cambridge: By Order of the City Council, 1891), p. 19.
- ¹⁸ "The Public Library" *Cambridge Tribune* (Vol. XI, No. 23).
- ¹⁹ Free Public Library Commission, *4th Annual Report* (1899), pp. 66.
- ²⁰ *The Rindge Gifts to the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts* (Cambridge: By Order of the City Council, 1891), p. 16.
- ²¹ Trustees of the Cambridge Public Library. *Report* (1889), p. 168.

(Notes)

- ²² Ibid., p. 171.
- ²³ Ibid., p. 174.
- ²⁴ Cambridge Chronicle (Vol. 44, No. 2271), September 7, 1889., p. 5.
- ²⁵ Cambridge Tribune (n.d.), CPL.
- ²⁶ Ibid., pp. 66-67.
- ²⁷ Van Brunt & Howe, *General Specification: Addition to Cambridge Public Library, Cambridge Mass* (typescript at Cambridge Public Library), p. 2.
- ²⁸ Ibid., pp. 30-31.
- ²⁹ Olmsted Brothers, Report on Parks Department, (1898) p. 57.
- ³⁰ Olmsted Brothers, Report of Parks Department, (1899), p. 35-36.
- ³¹ Trustees of the Cambridge Public Library. *Report* (1889), p. 167.
- ³² Free Public Library Commission, *4th Annual Report* (1899), pp. 66.
- ³³ Drawings in Cambridge Public Library.
- ³⁴ "CWA Art Projects at the Public Library" and "Cambridge Library Mural Paintings Depict History of Printing Press," *Traveler* (May 21, 1934) in CPL clippings file.
- ³⁵ Report of Parks Department (1935), p. 3.
- ³⁶ Report of Parks Department (1925), p. 13.
- ³⁷ Report of Parks Department (1932), p. 10.
- ³⁸ Trustees of the Cambridge Public Library. *Report* (1889), p. 174.
- ³⁹ Typescript in Cambridge Public Library files, n.d.



Entry Portico, 2002



Slate Roof at Tower, 2002

2.0 SUMMARY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

2.1 Introduction

Ann Beha Architects reviewed existing building conditions at the Cambridge Public Library in June and July of 2002. The current survey is an update of one prepared by this same firm in the fall of 1995. We were assisted by several of our project consultants. Building Conservation Associates provided a survey of exterior masonry conditions. Brian Eaton of LeMessurier Consultants accompanied the architect in an inspection of building structure. Gilbert & Becker, roofing contractors, were employed to assist the architect in a physical inspection of the roof. Donald York of the Cambridge Public Library provided archival resources as well as a history of building repair and maintenance. The examination was primarily visual, and aimed at identifying current needs for repair, and areas of weakness that could impact strategies for the renovation and expansion plan. The following is a summary description that includes maintenance history, existing conditions, and recommendations for repair.

2.2 Roofing and Drainage

2.2.1 Description.

The original building and subsequent Van Brunt & Howe wings have steeply-pitched and gabled slate roofs with dormers. The slate is Washington County Non-fading Red Slate and is still available from several quarries in New York and Vermont. On the north side of the 1889 Reading Room, there is also an extensive section of soldered, flat seam cooper roofing. The copper gutters, ornamental conductor heads and downspouts of the Van Brunt era appear to be original. The apsidal end of the Stack Wing has an outdated tar and gravel roof. The 1967 wing has a new membrane roof.

2.2.2 Maintenance History.

Extensive repairs were made in 1989 and again in 2001:

- 1989. A large section of slate roof to the north of the Cambridge Room was stripped and replaced with purple slate. There was also a recommendation for the west flank of the Stack Wing to be replaced, but this was not done. Loose, broken, and missing slates were repaired or replaced on that section and on all other areas of slate roofing. A new membrane roof was installed on the 1967 Wing, on a section of sloped roof between the Cambridge Room and the 1967 Wing, and above the garage between the Stack and the 1894 Wings. The copper roofing, flashing and gutters of the Van Brunt sections were not affected.
- 2001. Missing or loose slates from the original roof were replaced. The west flank of the Stack Wing and the south elevation received the most attention.
- 2001. As a separate scope of work, the sub-surface drainage system was repaired and/or replaced.



Water Stains, Attic, 2002



Roof Probe, 2002



Gutter Damage, 2002

2.2.3 Current Assessment.

a. Slate Roof. The red slate roofing, copper ridge caps and flashing appear to be generally in good condition and have benefited from appropriate maintenance and repair. However, after 114 years, the roof shows inevitable signs of age and may be reaching the end of its expected life span. The slate roof was physically examined with a representative from Gilbert & Becker. The attics under these roofs were also surveyed. In four areas, slates were removed in order to inspect the condition of the flashings, roofing felt and wood sheathing. Ridge caps and valleys are weathered but appear to be appropriately detailed and functional. Step-flashing at dormers is generally in good working order. Plaster damage on the west wall of the Cambridge Room suggests that step-flashing at parapets requires attention. An examination of the roofing felt indicated that, in areas receiving direct sunlight, this material is all but disintegrated. According to the roofer, there is now limited second means of defense against moisture should a slate become loose or missing. The risk of developing leaks in the future is great. In the attic, areas of staining indicate a history of numerous leaks. The rafters and wood sheathing, however, appear to sound, indicating that past leaks have not caused significant damage. (Refer to discussion of open mortar joints in Section 2.3 as an additional source of moisture infiltration).

b. Copper Roofing. There are several areas of active water infiltration inside the building. The worst of these occur in the junction between the 1889 Reading Room and the 1894 Wing under the copper roof. The roofer positively identified that loose and improperly installed step-flashing along the perimeter of the chimney at this location is allowing water to enter the building. This is the cause of significant plaster damage inside the Sakey Lecture Room and in the Genealogy Library above it. In addition, there is evidence that weak or open seams in the copper roof itself may be drawing moisture into the attic.

c. Gutters and Downspouts. As noted, the formed copper gutters, ornamental conductor heads and downspouts appear to be original. These all are in good physical condition. However, there is typically standing water in most sections of gutter. Downspouts appear to be clogged in many locations. Typically, enclosed areas where birds tend to congregate seem to be the most difficult areas to maintain. There is evidence of water problems at the northeast corner of the stack wing that appear to be related to the adjacent rain leaders.

d. Tar and Gravel Roof. The cause of interior damage in this area above the apsidal end of the Stack Wing has been addressed, but this roof is outdated and should be replaced.

e. Membrane Roofing. As membrane roofing and associated flashings and parapet caps were installed in 2001, these areas can be considered new.



Patched Slate at Dormers, 2002

2.2.4 Roofing Recommendations

- Install new membrane roof over apsidal end of Stack Wing.
- Clean out and maintain gutters and downspouts on a regular basis, at least twice a year.
- Upgrade current bird deterrent systems.
- Repair step-flashing along chimney at copper roof.
- Repair open joints in copper roof.
- Repair flashing at parapet above west wall of Cambridge Room.
- Consider phased plan for total replacement of slate roof and associated copper ridges, valleys and flashing.
- Establish a cost estimate for total replacement of flat seam copper roofing and slate roofing with associated copper ridges, valleys and flashing.



West Portico, 2002

2.3 Masonry

2.3.1 Existing Conditions

The building is composed of smooth and rock-faced Longmeadow granite and reddish-brown Dedham sandstone. In some areas, the sandstone has been intricately carved. Building Conservation Associates was commissioned to provide a detailed survey of masonry conditions. This is a summary of their findings and recommendations, which will be used to develop a scope of work for masonry restoration. The full text of the BCA report as well as color photographic documentation is available as a separate attachment to the 1/31/03 Conceptual Design Report. It should be noted that the entire sandstone cornice of the west elevation of the Stack Wing as well as the north elevation of the 1889 Structure adjacent to the 1967 Wing was removed during the construction of that addition. At that same time, approximately ten linear feet of intricately carved sandstone frieze was removed from the west elevation of the 1889 Structure. This stone would have to be replaced if these historic elevations are to be restored.

The granite is heavily soiled in certain locations but its condition remains excellent. The sandstone is typically in worse condition. Although Dedham sandstone is more durable than most, it is significantly softer than granite and, unfortunately, has been deployed throughout the building façade in the most exposed locations such as sills and cornices. The condition of the sandstone varies from instances of moderate to severe spalling, cracking and surface erosion. Most surfaces are extensively soiled and there is extensive pigeon staining in recessed areas. It should be noted, however, that in only a few instances is the deterioration considered structural. These most deteriorated elements include the projected sandstone soffits at the second floor dormer windows above the portico and sandstone quoins on the north elevation of the Stack Wing.



West Elevation, Stack Wing, 2002



Balustrade, 1894 Wing, 2002



Window, South Elevation, 2002

The issue of soiling is of particular concern for the sandstone, as it accelerates the rate of all modes of deterioration. The primary source of damage is water. Deterioration of the sandstone has occurred at water problem areas including the following:

- Cracking of sandstone pier at main entrance.
- Erosion at window soffits at both 1889 and 1894 wings.
- Cracking and displacement outside semi-circular room of the Stack Wing.
- Deteriorated sandstone with efflorescence and algae growth east elevation of the 1894 Wing and at the north elevation of the Stack Wing.

Open or cracked mortar joints are by far the most serious masonry problem at the library. In some areas, nearly 80% of the joints are either open or cracked. The problem results from a combination of water, age and, in this case, inappropriately hard repointing mortar. It was noted that the intake of water due to an inadequately sealed exterior envelope is responsible for much of the deterioration of the stone and may be the cause of interior damage as well.

2.3.2 Maintenance History.

Repairs to the front steps were made at the east entrance stair in 1994. The bluestone steps were removed and relaid. Although we have not found maintenance records for the sandstone and granite, the survey team recorded a history of repair work. While most of this work was beneficial, some of it, such as inappropriate caulking and patching, will have to be reversed.

2.3.3 Masonry Recommendations

- 100% repointing of stone.
- Patch cracks and deteriorated areas with mortar colored to match the sandstone.
- 100% Restoration cleaning. Clean existing masonry to prevent associated deterioration and to allow pointing and new construction work to match the original and age together.
- Replace stone that is structurally compromised. Assume 5%.
- Replace stone removed in 1967 if the affected historic elevations are to be restored.



Damaged Stone Sill, 2002



Rotted Sill, 2002



View of Entry, 2002

2.4.0 Windows and Doors

2.4.1 Existing Conditions.

Window of the historic building are double-hung wood sash and frame. They were extensively repaired in 1986 and 1987. In general, the windows appear to be in fair condition, except in exposed areas such as the east sides of the Stack Wing and the 1894 Wing, where sills are severely rotted. The frames have peeling paint and cracked or missing epoxy. In several locations, the sills have been removed. Most of the windows are still operable, but several have broken sash cords. Cracked glass is a continuing problem, with some areas being replaced with wire glass. Screens were installed when the windows were last repaired, but there are no storm windows.

The original entry doors and transom were replaced with an aluminum storefront in 1967. This is in good condition, but is not historically appropriate. The 1889 design is documented in drawings and photographs. The exterior doors at the northeast corner of the 1894 Wing are original. They are in fair condition with peeling paint and split wood. It should be noted that all of the windows, sash as well as frame, in the west elevation of the Stack Wing and in the north elevation of the 1889 Structure were removed during the construction of the 1967 Addition.

2.4.2 Maintenance History.

Wood sash and frames in all but the 1967 Wing were repaired in 1986-87. The basement windows of the stack wing were replaced with metal windows in the 1930's. The latter are on good condition. No significant repair work has been done since 1987.

2.4.3 Window and Door Recommendations

- Preserve existing wood sash and frames. Replace rotted sills. Replace broken glass. Consolidate sash as required and repaint. Replace broken or missing window screens.
- The addition of storm windows or complete window replacement should be considered if it is determined that it would have a significant impact on the overall heating and cooling of the expanded facility. In less visible areas, replacement with metal sash may be an option but new thermally-glazed, wood windows are preferred. Replacement windows must match the original details and configurations. The addition of thermally glazed windows would eliminate the need for storm windows.
- If the historic elevations are to be restored, the windows removed in 1967 must be replaced.
- Replace doors at the main entrance with doors that are historically appropriate.
- Repair remaining original doors at lecture hall and stack wing.



Reading Room, 2002



Genealogy Room, at East Stair 2002



Lecture Hall at East Stair, 2002

2.5 Interior Finishes

2.5.1 Existing Conditions.

Historic finishes such as plaster and architectural millwork are generally in good condition. In some instances, they have been replaced or covered with newer materials.

a. Doors and Hardware: Doors are generally in good condition. Several original doors were replaced with metal doors during the 1967 renovations. In the former delivery room, for example, the west doorway was modified, and the east door remains. The vestibule exit door in the lecture hall swings in the wrong direction and does not meet code. The original glass transom above the exit door has been replaced with plywood.

b. Flooring: Most rooms are finished with vinyl tile which is generally worn. Some tiles in the main reading area have been replaced with tiles that do not match. Areas of vinyl asbestos tile should be positively identified and removed. The circulation area, history room, lecture hall, south and west stairs are finished with carpet that is worn.

c. Plaster: Plaster is generally in good condition, but there are isolated areas of moderate to severe damage related to existing deterioration in the roof.

- Peeling paint, water stains and plaster cracks were noted in the main reading areas from past roof leaks. In one instance, damaged plaster has affected one of the Delivery Room murals.
- More significant water damage was found in the ceiling of the semi-circular room of the Stack Wing.
- Cracked, water damaged, and flaking plaster was found in the Cambridge Room.
- Cracked and patched plaster were noted at dormered areas of the second floor of the 1894 Wing.
- The worst damage has occurred above the east stair at the junction of the 1889 and 1894 wing. This area of active water infiltration has been noted in the description of the Copper Roof. In addition, there are water stains and damaged plaster at the exterior wall opposite the east stair.

d. Paint: Most painted finishes are in good condition, except where exposed to water damage. The painted brick surfaces in the stack wing are in fair condition with peeling paint and spalling brick at the north corners. Original paint treatments have been covered over.

e. Wood: Wood finishes in the main reading areas and lecture hall are generally in good condition with some surfaces worn. Several alterations were made to the original wood paneling during the 1967 renovations, but at least in the Reading Room, these intrusions are generally reversible.



Reading Room, 2002

f. Murals: Mural paintings are located in the archways of the original Delivery Room and half dome at the end of the Reading Room. These are generally in good condition, having been cleaned and sealed in 1990. The mural on the west archway was also restored following water damage from the roof. It appears that new damage has occurred in this location since the mural was last repaired.

g. Lighting: The current lighting fixtures do not complement the architecture.

2.5.2 Maintenance History.

In the former Delivery and Reading Rooms, as well as in the interiors of the 1894 Wing, historic woodwork, doors and plaster surfaces have been generally well preserved and maintained. The alterations made to the interior of the original building during the 1967 renovations are an exception to the general level of preservation in these areas.

2.5.3 Interior Finish Recommendations

a. Flooring: Upgrade finishes throughout. Where positively identified vinyl asbestos tile should be removed. Install new floor finishes in 1889 and 1894 wings, including the existing reading rooms, circulation area, and lecture hall. Identify original floor finish in Reading and Delivery rooms and consider new wood floors or other finish material to match. Replace carpet on the existing south and east stair.

b. Doors and Hardware: Replace 1967 storefront in the vestibule and 1967 interior doors and transom inserts in the Delivery Room and in the Lecture Hall. Replace these with doors that match the original designs or are historically appropriate. Include hardware that meets current code requirements.

c. Plaster: Investigate cause of plaster cracks and repair. Fill cracked plaster. Provide new skimcoat on walls and ceilings where plaster has been removed or extensive damage exists.

d. Paint: Paint plaster ceiling and walls throughout with a paint scheme informed by the Historic Paint Analysis provided by Bulding Conservation Associates. The full text of the BCA report as well as color photographic documentation is available as a separate attachment to the 1/31/03 Conceptual Design Report.

e. Wood: Refinish wood surfaces in 1889 and 1894 wings. Restore paneling and trim where it has been concealed, damaged or removed.

f. Murals: Investigate need for restoration at damaged areas.

g. Lighting: Provide more effective task and architectural lighting throughout. Consider historically accurate or appropriate decorative fixtures at key locations.

2.6 Building Code

In general, all areas should be brought up to current standards without detracting from the historic character. The Sullivan Code Group has issued a draft Chapter 34 Code Report to the design team and this will be used as a guide for determining what changes are required. Egress requirements may impact how the existing building is utilized in the renovated project. The existing 1889 and 1894 wings do not have an enclosed stair or second means of egress from the second floor. Egress lighting and signage is inadequate and should be replaced. There is currently no fire suppression system. For more detail regarding these systems refer to the MEP report. The following is a summary of code improvement recommendations:

- Review options for providing second means of egress and access to enclosed stair from second floor spaces, as well as access to an elevator.
- Provide up-to-date emergency lighting, egress signage, and panic hardware throughout the building.
- Provide an up-to-date smoke detection/fire alarm system throughout the building.
- Assume installation of a full fire suppression system.

2.7 Accessibility

As in many historic buildings, providing accessibility to all areas of the Library will be a challenge. As the design for the expanded facility develops, the accessibility consultant, Kessler MCGuinness @ Associates, will work with the design to develop a plan for the historic building. Their preliminary assessment has been included in the 1/31/03 Conceptual Design Report.

The Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (AAB) states that “If the work being performed amounts to more than 25% of the 100% equalized assessed value of the building, the entire facility shall comply with the AAB regulations.” The anticipated scope of the renovation and expansion of the library will exceed 25% of the assessed value. Alterations to buildings that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, however, shall comply to the maximum extent “feasible” with Section 4.1.7 of the American’s with Disabilities Act Guidelines (ADAG). The ADA law, recognized the difficulty in altering existing historic structures and only requires that architectural barriers be removed when it is “readily achievable”. All alterations require consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office. It will be a goal of the design team to make all areas of the library including spaces within the historic building accessible. How this is achieved will depend on the layout of the renovation plan as it evolves.

2.8 Building Systems

The mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems within the existing building will be replaced. An assessment of the current MEP systems as well as an existing building report from the structural engineer have been included in the 1/31/03 Conceptual Design Report.



Added railing at portico



South Elevation



Juncture 1967 Stair and West Elevation

3.0 PRESERVATION PLANNING

3.1 Significance and Integrity of Historic Fabric

3.1.0 Significance

The Cambridge Public Library is significant on several levels. As noted in the National Register nomination, it is one of four public buildings given to the City of Cambridge in the 1880's by benefactor Frederick Rindge. Conceived by its donor as an anchor to an important civic and educational campus, the library has continued to fulfill a symbolic role as the center of the Broadway site. As described in the historical summary, the building itself is an important example of nineteenth century library architecture. It figures prominently in the work of Henry Van Brunt and represents an important example of the library plan that he developed. While the exterior details of Cambridge Library "draw heavily on earlier Richardson libraries at Woburn, Quincy and North Easton,"¹ the interior planning and overall massing reflect Van Brunt's innovation. Cambridge is one of three Van Brunt libraries still in use today and among these is the most prominent and best preserved.

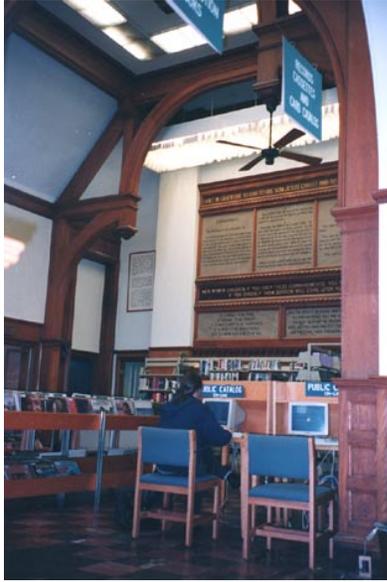
3.1.1 Exterior Integrity

1889 Building. The principal (south-facing) facade of the Cambridge Public Library has remained essentially unaltered since the time of its construction. Minor changes include removal of the original 6-panel front doors and the multi-light glazed transom, which took place in 1967. At a later date, a section of brownstone balustrade was removed during the addition of a handicapped lift and metal railing at the West Portico.² A 20th century brick extension detracts from the design of the original chimney. In every other respect, this important aspect of the library is preserved, not only as a façade, but also as a complete architectural statement composed of the portico, tower and reading room. For exceptions to this generally high level of preservation, see the description of the impact of the 1967 Addition below.

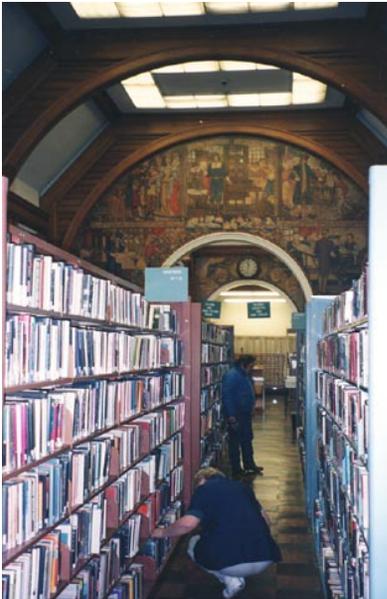
1894 Wing. The east and north elevations of this wing have not been altered except for the loss of the original glazed transom above the entry door. The lower portion of the west elevation, never readily visible, was obscured by the addition of a garage between this wing and the east elevation of the Stack Wing in 1967.

Stack Wing. The principal remaining feature of this wing is the north-facing apsidal bay added during the 1902 expansion. The west elevation is concealed by the 1967 addition and the east elevation is compromised by the garage. For a fuller description of the status of the west elevation of the Stack Wing, see the description of the 1967 Addition below.

1967 Addition. The most significant alterations to the historic fabric occurred during the construction of the 1967 Wing. The addition concealed the west elevation of the Stack Wing as well as the adjacent north elevation of the



Former Recovery Room, 2002



Reading Room, 2002

1898 Building. At that time, the entire brownstone cornice and associated copper gutter along these elevations were removed. All of the windows, frames and sash, were removed as well. New openings were cut into the granite at several locations. In addition, the stair tower added at that time encroached on the west elevation of the entry portico, resulting in the loss of two window bays and several linear feet of intricately carved brownstone frieze. (See photograph previous page.)

Clarity of Original Massing. Except for the effects of the 1967 construction, Van Brunt & Howe's design has not been substantially altered. The south façade as well as the exterior of the 1894 Wing and the apsidal end of the Stack Wing remain substantially preserved. Some portions of the building may be more architecturally successful than others. One could argue that the 1894 Wing contradicts the massing of the original design. That addition blocked the east elevation of the Stacks Wing and obscured the T-shaped plan that most clearly exemplifies Van Brunt's contribution to library planning. In contrast, the 1902 extension of the Stack Wing was a completion of the plan and exterior massing that Van Brunt originally intended. We should note, however, that the historic library building represents a series of developments from the original 1889 conception rather than a composition frozen in a single moment in time. All of the work through 1902 represents the historic building, especially as it was designed by the same architect. Although it was intended to complement the existing building, 1967 Addition is not considered a highly valuable part of the architecture.

3.1.2 Interior Integrity

Entrance. Little original detailing or trim remains in the entrance lobby, as this was extensively renovated in 1967. The original configuration and details of the vestibule are, however, documented in drawings and photographs.

Main Reading Rooms. The essential qualities of the former Delivery and Reading Rooms remain intact but are currently compromised by overcrowding and the introduction of inappropriate lighting. Book stacks and other equipment obscure the proportions and details of these spaces. The original chandeliers, which were suspended from the wood trusses and sconces attached to the bookshelves, have been removed. Fluorescent fixtures not sympathetic with the original architecture have been installed in the flat portions of the ceilings, including the apse, and a large fluorescent pendant hangs above the Rindge tablets. The historic, multi-colored paint scheme has been obliterated with white paint, causing the varnished wood trim to stand out in stark contrast. The vinyl floor tile is obviously not original. Paneling along the entry to the stacks has been covered with plywood, but is believed to be intact. However, most of the original architectural millwork, including baseboards, perimeter bookshelves, paneled wainscot and trusses, remains in excellent condition and, with minimal intervention, these rooms could recapture much of their original integrity.

Memorial Room. Original finishes in this space included a wood base and cornice in dark green paint, and wood cases on the west exterior wall. The west wall and all original finishes in this room, with the exception of the west window sash, were removed and replaced with modern fixtures and finishes in 1967.



Former Children's Room, 2002



Stacks, Detail, 2002

Former Children's Library (Sakey Lecture Room). The original treatment of this space included varnished wood trim on windows and doors and on the pilasters and beams that divided the space into four bays. Curved brackets supported the ceiling beams and framed the opening with the stair to the upper level. Windows had eight-over-eight sash, with an eight-light glazed transom; the transom appears to have been replaced with simpler four-light sash. Below the windowsills ran shelving on the east and west walls of the room. The shelving was removed in the early 1950's and the cornice replaced with a wide fascia. In 1967, a wood screen was installed over the door and four glazed openings that screened offices on the north end of the room from the reading room. The room has been obscured by draperies at the windows and lighting equipment at the "stage" area, but the essential form and detail of the space remain the same.

Second Floor. The Cambridge Room on the second floor of the original building and the History and Genealogy Room above the former Children's Library were originally treated simply, with varnished wood baseboards, chair rail and door and window trim. Most elements remain intact.

Stacks. The "stacks" were built from a kit of pre-manufactured parts. The metal shelf standards (8 feet high and 3 feet apart in rows forming 3 foot aisles) are stacked one on top of another and provide support not only for the wooden shelves but for the upper floor levels, which consist of 18" x 36" metal grate panels, and the wooden roof framing as well. In other words, the shelf standards are the vertical structural members within the building. They rest on pad footings immediately below the floor slab and the roof purlins are attached to them in the attic space above the shelving. Traditionally, the book stack has been treated as utilitarian space and it remained closed to the public until 1967.⁴ The interior walls consist of painted brick and there was never any attempt to make the book stack appear anything more or less than what it is, an early industrial solution to compact book storage. The space, however, was carefully planned; each aisle corresponding to an exterior window to the east and west. This amenity was compromised with both the 1894 and 1967 additions. The first blocked the view to the park and the second closed off the west facing windows completely. One of the main drawbacks to the stack is that the stair connecting the various levels is non-compliant and there is currently no handicap accessibility to the two levels above the first floor. Despite its age and current limitations, the book stack remains in excellent condition and continues to serve the purpose for which it was built.

(Notes)

- ¹ Susan Maycock, "Cambridge Public Library," Massachusetts Historical Society Survey Form MC II C 7, 1967.
- ² This architectural fragment was salvaged and is stored in the building's basement.
- ³ Photographs taken during the 1967 construction show that most of the exterior masonry of the existing elevations was left in place, although where connections were made, the stone was cut.
- ⁴ According to Donald York, of the Cambridge Public Library, the stacks were first opened to the public as a temporary solution to over-crowding during the construction of the 1967 addition. By popular demand (as well as the convenience of the library staff), they remained open.

3.2 Existing Planning Considerations

a. National Register of Historic Places. The Cambridge Public Library is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A copy of the nomination form is included as Appendix 5.2. As such, any work done with Federal funds would require approval by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, but approval is required in any case by virtue of the existing preservation restriction (see below).

b. Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District. The Library is located within the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District. Under the district regulations, “any alteration or construction of ... structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places” is subject to review and requires issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness prior to issuance of a building permit.

c. Massachusetts Historical Commission Preservation Restriction. As a condition of grants provided for window restoration in 1985, a Preservation Restriction was executed with MHC. This requires that “no alteration shall be made unless ... the Commission has previously determined that it will not seriously impair architectural and historical values after reviewing plans and specifications.” A copy of the Restriction is included as Appendix 5.3.

3.3 Preservation Philosophy

The history of the Cambridge Public Library has been a history of ongoing additions and alterations in response to the challenges of serving the public. The first addition was made less than five years after the completion of the Library, and the building has nearly doubled in size in the past 100 years. The expansion of the Library currently under consideration should be seen as another chapter in that history.

At the same time, the most significant portions of the Library have retained their historic character through the years. Therefore, a Preservation Philosophy has been developed to identify significant features of the Library so that future change can take place without unnecessary loss of historic material. The foundation for the Preservation Philosophy has been the basic principles outlined in the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, developed by the National Park Service and reprinted in Appendix 5.4. “Rehabilitation” is defined as “the act or process of making possible an efficient compatible use for a property through repair, alterations and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural or architectural values.”¹ The standards which are most relevant to the Cambridge Public Library project include the following:

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

3. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
4. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.²

3.4 Design Criteria

Each of the spaces within and around the Library have been assigned to one of three zones. Criteria for establishing the zones included the following:

1. Architectural or historic significance of the space and elements as determined through the historical and architectural evaluations.
2. The integrity of the space, or the number and rarity of significant details remaining in the space, compared to later alterations or deterioration.
3. The opportunity for public access and appreciation.

Descriptions of the three preservation zones and recommended design guidelines associated with them are given below.

Zone 1: Restoration

Areas designated in Zone I are of the highest priority and of primary significance to the Library. They contain the most distinctive architectural elements; are the most completely preserved; and are the areas most frequently viewed or experienced by the public. These spaces include the principal (south and east) exterior elevations, the main reading rooms and the former Children's Library, now the Sakey Room.

Any new work carried out in Zone I spaces should aim toward restoration of their historic appearance. Prior to initiating this work, additional, more detailed historic research and conservation analyses should be carried out to determine the restoration approach and scope. Alteration, removal or replacement of significant features should not be permitted. Modern mechanical and electrical systems should be concealed by installing them in adjacent, less significant spaces and utilizing existing openings for diffuser grilles, etc. Future repair and rehabilitation efforts should aim to remove more recent intrusions and to restore the original finishes, distinctive features and lighting fixtures.

Zone 2: Preservation

Zone 2 encompasses spaces which are less important architecturally and contain fewer historic details. As with Zone 1, significant features should be preserved. Where new elements are required, or restoration of original materials is not possible, the new materials and elements should be consistent with the original ones in terms of scale and appearance. Zone 2 includes the remaining exterior elevations, the Cambridge Room and the Local History and Genealogy Room on the second floor.

Zone 3: Rehabilitation

Many spaces in the building either had little detailing originally, or have been so extensively altered in the past that no significant details remain. Spaces in Zone 3 may be rehabilitated as necessary, but must avoid impact on zones of greater significance adjacent to them. For example, installation of dropped ceilings should not obscure windows which are part of Zones 1 and 2. This zone generally includes the remainder of the building, including the interior of Stacks Wing, the basement and the 1967 Wing.

(Footnotes)

- ¹ National Park Service, *Cultural Resource Management Guideline* (July 1994), Appendix C, Page 237.
- ² National Park Service, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, 1995.

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