

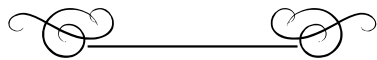


WadsworthLibrary

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**A Guide to the Art and Architecture
at Wadsworth Library**

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Calendar Clock

A point of interest, behind the circulation desk, is a weight driven clock with two dials, made by Seth Thomas Company, Thomaston, Connecticut. This calendar clock, which gives the time of day, day of the week and the year, was manufactured in 1862. The mechanisms are contained in a redwood case.

Historic District

Wadsworth Library, located at 24 Center Street, is included in the Main Street District of Geneseo, Livingston County, New York, and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977.



Wadsworth Guards

Also in the Reading Room, is a photograph of the survivors of the 104th NY Volunteers (Wadsworth Guards) at their regimental monument in Gettysburg, PA, on July 1, 1913. While occupying this position exactly fifty years before, the regiment had lost 194 of its 330 men present for duty.

George Washington Letters

In the main reading room on the west wall are two letters framed in glass and dated 1776 and 1799. They were written by George Washington and found among Wadsworth papers in the Genesee Valley National Bank. One is signed, "Your most obd't and very humble servant."

Charles Frederick Wadsworth

Also on the west wall is a portrait of Charles Wadsworth (1835-1899), who served on the Library Board of Trustees for 30 years. He was the first of General Wadsworth's six children, and at the age of 24 became the first native-born American to receive a diploma from a French school.

Upon his return to the U.S., he was commissioned in the 11th NY Volunteers during the Civil War and later was made a major "for gallant and meritorious services."

Martin Brimmer, Jr.

One of the founding trustees of the library and son of Harriet Wadsworth Brimmer, eldest daughter of James and Naomi Wadsworth, Martin Brimmer (1829-1896) served on the Library Board from 1869 to 1889. His portrait hangs on the west wall.

The son of a mayor of Boston, he graduated from Harvard in 1849 and was admitted to the Massachusetts Bar and Legislature. Because of his interest in art and fondness for European travel, he was one of the founders of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Martin Brimmer gave the Barye statue to Wadsworth Library.

John Young

The last painting on the west wall is of John Young (1802-1852) of Conesus, NY, who practiced law in Geneseo. In 1847 he was elected the 19th Governor of New York State. A member of the Anti-Masonic and Whig Parties, he supported the building of the Genesee Valley Canal. He was appointed Assistant Treasurer of the City of New York.

Art and Architecture at Wadsworth Library

The original building of Wadsworth Library, which is now the wing facing Center Street, was built by B.C. Dean of Buffalo, NY, in 1867. The cost of \$13,000 was supplied in large part from the estate of General James S. Wadsworth.

The architect, C.N. Otis of Buffalo, designed the Italianate style building in the exact proportions of the famous Parthenon in Athens. It was built of Buffalo pressed brick with the base, corner sills, and caps of Lockport cut stone. The interesting floor of the interior was made of alternate strips of walnut and white ash.

In 1883 an upstairs gallery was added over the vestibule and in 1914 the existing stamped tin ceiling was installed. At that time the room was lighted by a large gas chandelier that hung in the center.

In 1996 a new wing was added on the south side and much care was taken to match the architecture and details of the existing building. For example, the windows were removed from the rear of the original building and built into the west wall of the area that is now the children's room, and part of the brick exterior can still be seen near the circulation desk where the old and new buildings join. The Rochester architectural firm of Handler, Grasso, Durfee, Bridges designed the new addition, and Frank Mariancci of Holcomb, NY, did the work.

Wildflowers

The library contains eight delicate watercolors that are not signed but are attributed to Martha Blow Wadsworth (1868-1934).

Mrs. Wadsworth, who lived with her husband, Herbert, at Ashantee in Avon, NY, was a woman of many talents. As well as an artist, she was a superlative horsewoman, a photographer, botanist, and pianist. In the winter months she and her husband lived in Washington DC, where she entertained lavishly.

The watercolors were found after many years in an old wooden box in the library. Depicted are local wildflowers: fringed gentian, mountain laurel, gay lady's slipper, false foxglove (in the downstairs meeting room), cardinal flower, yellow lady's slipper, woody nightshade, (in the director's office), and wild rose (behind the service desk).

“Theseus Slaying the Centaur Bianor”: an original bronze by Antoine-Louis Barye (1796-1875)

As we turn around from the circulation desk we see a bronze statue of heroic size, given to the library in 1869 by Martin Brimmer, Jr., a founding member of the Board of Trustees and a nephew of James S. Wadsworth.

According to Greek mythology, Theseus, a king of early Athens, was the son of Aethra, the princess of Troezen, and either King Aegeus or the god Poseidon. It was Theseus who killed the Minotaur on the Isle of Crete. The statue depicts Theseus fighting with Bianor in the Battle of the Centaurs, which took place at a wedding where the centaurs, excited by wine, tried to abduct the bride! They were stopped by Theseus wielding a mighty club that he had taken from a dangerous bandit named Periphetes, whom he killed in his youth.

The artist, Antoine-Louis Barye, was the son of a Paris goldsmith who studied art with the sculptor Bosio and the painter Gros. He began a serious study of animals that led to the founding of the French school of sculptors known as *Les Animaliers*. These artists broke with the established tradition in which man was considered the proper subject for sculpture and in which animals were represented only in idealized form. Barye did realistic, dramatic, and often violent works of wildlife. American collectors were his best patrons from the 1860's onwards.

There are three castings of “Theseus Slaying the Centaur”. One is at the Louvre in Paris, one in the Metropolitan Museum in New York City, and the third is here before you.

Landscape Paintings

On either side of the interior of the original south wall, as one faces the circulation desk, are two paintings of the Hudson River School. On the right is a work entitled “Landscape with Bluff and Birds” by Henry Johnson Brent (1811-1889), who lived in Rochester, NY, in 1857.

On the left is a painting done by Frederick T. Vance (1840-1892) called “Mountain Landscape with Bridge”. Vance taught art at the Geneseo Temple Hill Academy and lived two houses down from this library on Second Street. The subject of the painting is a landscape near the village of Leeds, NY, in the Catskill Mountains.

General James S. Wadsworth

On the east wall next to the “Mountain Landscape with Bridge” is a photograph of James Samuel Wadsworth, a lawyer and Genesee Valley landowner. During the Civil War he served as Brigadier General and participated in the victory of the Union Army at Gettysburg. He died of wounds received in the Battle of the Wilderness, leaving money in his will to build the library.

James Wadsworth

The next portrait is of the General's father, James (1768-1844). He and his brother William were among the first settlers in the Genesee Valley, having acquired a 4000-acre tract of land.

James was born in Connecticut and graduated from Yale University in 1787. He was a philanthropist with a particular interest in public education. As a land agent he offered premiums to towns that would establish libraries. In 1843 he established and endowed with \$10,000 the Athenaeum Library that was the forerunner of Wadsworth Library. It was located in the white brick building next door to the Baptist Church (now Christ Community Church).

William Perkins Wadsworth

The next print is of William P. Wadsworth (1906-1982), shown with his foxhounds. The great-grandson of James, he attended Harvard University and then managed his family's land-holdings in the Genesee Valley.

He served in WWII in France with the 101st Cavalry and was master of the Genesee Valley Hunt, one of the oldest hunts in the U.S., from 1932 to 1975. His second wife, Penelope C. Wadsworth, was a trustee on the library board from 1960 to 1986.

Notice to New Settlers

This advertisement, signed by James Wadsworth and dated 1809, is located on the door of the vestibule of the original building. It promotes farmland in the region and describes its advantages. The price was from two to five dollars an acre. Please note the interesting changes in county and village names.

Fallbrook

In the Chanler Reading Room is a painting of Fallbrook, a waterfall located to the south and within walking distance of the village. The painting is in oil on a wooden board and is not signed. It was owned by Edmund R. Hammatt of Geneseo.