

At the Town Meeting on March 10, 1903 Henniker residents voted to accept the gift of a library from George W. Tucker and thus the responsibility of a library in this town in perpetuity. On September 22, 1904 the residents of the town of Henniker proudly came together to dedicate the Tucker Free Library. A reporter for the Manchester, NH newspaper of the day, *The Union*, wrote that “the library is up to date in every way.” The building was touted as a monument, landmark, and record for the freedom of thought. Community members genuinely understood the importance of the library to this town stating that Tucker Free was “a library that shall be patronized with such delight that this and coming generations will see to it that the present high reputation of the town as being one of the most intelligent in this Commonwealth, shall ever be fully maintained.” In the closing line of the dedication song written by the Reverend N.F. Carter, the appreciation of the gift of George W. Tucker as well as the promise and inspiration drawn from his legacy echoes,

“Here may the donor’s praise be sung, in richer, nobler, grander lives!”

The Tucker Free Library was named a benefactor of the Ann S. Soderstrom estate in 2009. Like George W. Tucker, Ann recognized the importance of a library to a community. She and her family volunteered to help with many projects that the library staff embarked on over the years. A voracious reader, when she could no longer come to the library staff made regular deliveries of boxes of books for Ann to enjoy. Her contributions weave her forever into the institutional tapestry of the Tucker Free Library.

In addition to George W. Tucker and Ann S. Soderstrom, many others have acknowledged the importance of this library to the Henniker community and have made one time donations or lasting gifts to support this invaluable resource. Henry Emerson purchased and then donated the land on which the library was built. Other residents, too numerous to mention individually, have contributed books, furnishings, skilled labor, and time to enhance the institution. Local businesses have historically provided services to the library at reduced costs. Former community members, trustees, and friends have established funds to provide financial support for the library over the years. These funds continue to benefit the operation of the library and allow for the purchase of equipment, books, and media in specific categories. These include not only the George W. Tucker and the Ann S. Soderstrom Funds but also funds established to honor Marjorie B. Bennett, Scott J. Berry, Helen M. Cammett, Anna L. Childs, D&W and E.L. Cogswell, L.A. Cogswell, Willis Cogswell, Alice Colby, James W. Doon, Robert N. Fitch, Francis O. Holmes, A.D. Huntoon, Mary F. Kjellman, Henry Preston, and the Walter K. Robinson. Prudent management of these funds by the trustees of the Tucker Free Library throughout the ages has guaranteed the future solvency of the library. As true stewards, the elected trustees of the Tucker Free Library remain vigilant, keeping their eyes on all aspects of library management as prescribed by the laws of the New Hampshire State Legislature.

Many have cared for the physical building throughout its history. Trustees, directors, staff, and townspeople have always answered the call, looking for ways to improve the functionality of the building. Shelving has been installed, walls have been erected, and entire collections have been developed while others have become obsolete. What remains constant has been the respect that all have had for the building, honoring the historic details that are represented so beautifully inside and out. After 108 years some work needs to be done to the building to guarantee that it remains in good working order. There are several projects on the “to-do-list” in 2013. The stained glass windows that are original to the building need restorative work; the terrazzo on the Main Floor needs to be cleaned, polished, and buffed; the hardwood floor in the NH Room needs to be refinished; and the carpeting throughout the building needs to be replaced. Additionally, a quiet work space is something that is lacking in the building so a plan has been developed to create this space.

In addition to our annual budget request for building operations, there are two warrant articles that we ask the community to support. The first is to accept grant money to restore the stained glass windows in the building and the second is to permit the use of some of the Ann S. Soderstrom fund to address the flooring issues as well as the creation of a media center/quiet reading space.

**Restoration of Stained Glass Windows.** As initially reported in the 2008 Town Report, many of the stained glass windows on the Main Floor are in need of repair. One was in such bad shape that it was removed by a restoration expert to protect it from further degradation. Working with the Friends of the Tucker Free Library, this window was restored at a cost of \$1,310.00. See [www.tuckerfreelibrary.org](http://www.tuckerfreelibrary.org) for pictures of the restoration process.

It is hoped that Tucker Free Library will receive a Moose Plate Preservation Grant (MPPG) to fund the restoration of the remaining windows. The first step in the process was completed last fall with the submission of a historical narrative to the NH Department of Historic Resources (NHHR). The NHHR has determined that our building is eligible for the preservation grant so the next step involves actually applying for the MPPG money. The deadline for this grant is late April so it is hoped that there will be notification of a positive outcome in May with work starting shortly thereafter.

**Flooring.** It has been well documented in Town Reports since 2008 that the carpeting in the building needs to be replaced. Having long out-lived the wear projections for commercial/high traffic flooring, it has become imperative that this issue is addressed this year. The area rug in the New Hampshire Room purchased in 1968 shows significant fraying along the edges. The carpeting in the non-fiction room, the fiction stacks, and the office space installed in 1970 has areas of extreme wear, fraying, and rippling. The carpeting in the lower level was installed in 1979. In the E-Room there is a rippling and fraying problem. In the J-Room, Hall, and Meeting Room moisture from the cement floor is causing the carpeting to buckle and most likely the adhesive to disintegrate. In these areas a sealing agent will be painted on the floor before the new carpeting is installed. Normal foot traffic has roughed up the floor in the New Hampshire Room which was last refinished in 1988. Finally, there is no record of the terrazzo floor ever being professionally cleaned, buffed, and polished since 1903. The cost of \$27,768.31 will be funded using money from the Ann S. Soderstrom trust.

**Media Center/Reading Room.** Anyone who has tried to work at the Tucker Free Library knows the great flaw in the design and utilization of the Main Floor; there is no quiet space to read, study, or work on the computers. This issue is exacerbated when the library hosts a program and therefore programming opportunities are limited. While exploring the concern, the objective was to find a space within the current footprint so a creative approach to solving the problem was necessary. Spending a great deal of time in each separate area of the library yielded a new appreciation of the architectural details of the Main Floor. One area in particular stood out because it didn't stand out, that space being the room where the non-fiction collection is located in the North West corner of the Main Floor. Tall, crowded shelves mute the grand aesthetic of the architectural details of the room. The proverbial light bulb went off; this is an ideal space, ripe for our project to create a quiet area!

Additional funds from the Ann S. Soderstrom trust will be used to create this media center/quiet reading space on the Main Floor. The scope of the project involves redistributing some books, purchasing new lower shelving, repurposing old shelving, and finally installing a glass door between the circulation area and the non-fiction area. Computers will be relocated to this room, work tables and comfortable seating will be made available. The estimated cost of total project is \$23,000.

We ask for your approval to use these funds so we can complete these necessary projects and keep the Tucker Free Library "up to date in every way."

Prepared and submitted on behalf of the Trustees of the Tucker Free Library by Lynn M. Piotrowicz, M.A., M.L.S., Director.

