

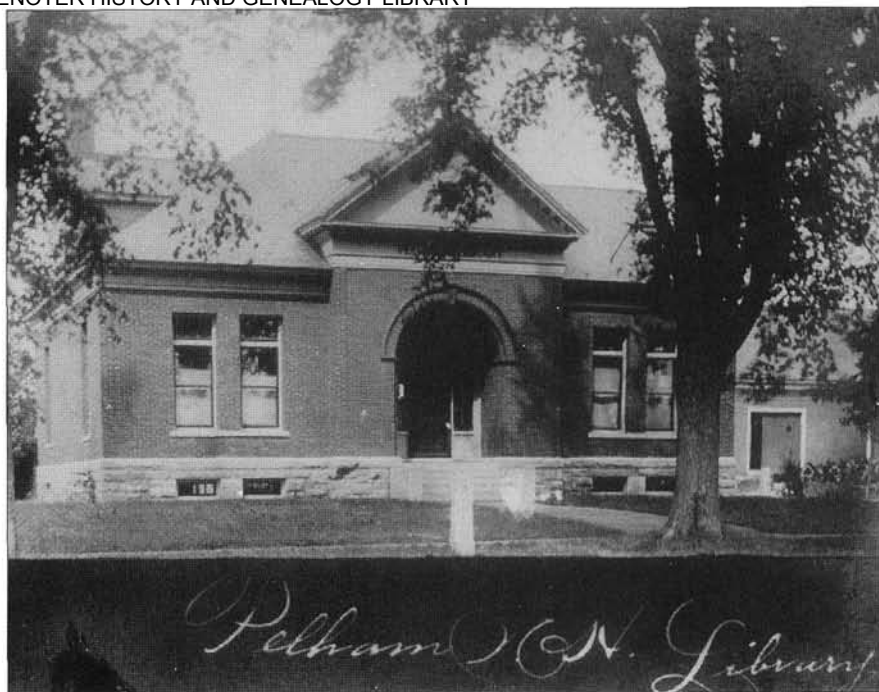
In March, 1893, the Town voted to establish a Public Library. The original Library was located in the Town Hall (on the parcel of land where the present Police/Fire Station is located). The Library was dedicated on January 17, 1893.

The Library grew rapidly and was soon in need of larger quarters. A special Town Meeting was called in April, 1895 which approved the sum of \$4,000.00 to construct a new Library building. The Town stipulated that the building contain a memorial room to honor the Pelham men who fought in the Civil War.

By a deed dated November 23, 1896, Frank M. Woodbury and his wife, Zena Belle Woodbury, donated the tract of land in Pelham Center on which the Library building was constructed. The deed places a condition on the transfer of the land:

*"The condition of this deed being that it shall be forever used and occupied by said Town of Pelham for a library and memorial building or for some educational purpose, and upon neglect of said Town to use it for this purpose for the space of two years in succession, said premises shall revert to me or my heirs or assigns and further, said Town of Pelham shall erect and forever maintain a suitable fence between said premises and other land of mine which it adjoins."*

Work was commenced in October, 1895 and was completed in 1896. John M. Woods, then of Somerville, Massachusetts, a native of Pelham and a veteran of the Civil War, donated the wood panelling that today adorns the walls in the memorial



Above, top: Pelham Public Library. The Pelham Library was built and dedicated in 1896, the same year that Boston's Public Library was completed. Both institutions offered to lend books to the public at no charge and were called "Free" Libraries, symbolizing a town's commitment to education and the betterment of its citizens.

Above, bottom: Pelham Library circa 1910. Another view of the Library. The large tree in front of the Library was brought down by the hurricane of 1938. Note the dirt road and the horsesheds just behind the Library. The granite posts were used to tie up a visitor's horse and remain today as a reminder of simpler times.



room. Other significant gifts were received from Charles Wheeler and William B. Thom, both Civil War veterans from Pelham. Marble plaques were engraved with the names of Pelham's veterans and mounted on the walls where they hang today. One of the first major gifts to the Library was an ornate Victorian grandfather clock which has steadily marked the hours for more than a century. The clock still stands in the Library's main room and bears a gold leaf dedication: *"Presented to Pelham Public Library by Mrs. Eli J. Whittemore in Memory of Her Father, David Hamblet - 1896"*.



As Pelham's first Librarian, appointed before the new Library existed, Mary Hobbs, "Aunt Molly" to all who knew her, served from 1892 to 1955. She was held in high esteem by adults and beloved by all the children who came to listen to her stories. She was a descendant of Pelham's first minister. She is shown here with the Gage Chair - which has been passed down through at least six generations of the Hobbs family before being willed to the Pelham Public Library. Two of its mates were left to the granddaughter of John Gage of Missouri and to Mrs. Clara Cutter Jack of Pelham, New Hampshire. These ornate chairs were of unusually fine quality when Mrs. Phebe Frye Gage brought them to Pelham around 1738, a time when most of Pelham's homes contained simple, hand-made furniture. These treasures are now about 260 years old.

*Left, top: Miss Mary Hobbs ("Aunt Molly") reading in the Library's main room.*

*Left, bottom: Mary Hobbs and the Gage Chair.*