

11-443	Salem	BEV. A	BEV.180 (updated)
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NRDIS 7/5/1984

FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
 MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
 220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
 BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town/City: Beverly

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):
Downtown

Address: 32 Essex Street

Historic Name: Beverly Public Library

Uses: Present: library
Original: library

Date of Construction: 1911-13; 1993

Source: Dept. of Public Safety records,
Municipal Documents

Style/Form: Classical Revival

Architect/Builder: Cass Gilbert, Charles G. Loring;
Anthony Tappe

Exterior Material:

Foundation: concrete

Wall/Trim: brick with marble trim

Roof: tar and gravel on main block;
standing seam metal on addition

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
none

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Rear addition and new window sash (1993) – re-building of front staircase and roof balustrade (2015)

Condition: excellent

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 1.14 acres

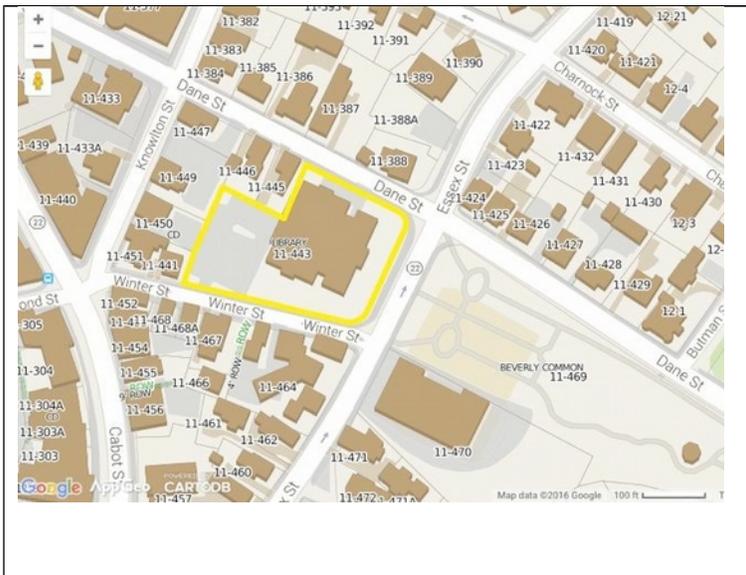
Setting: Faces Beverly Common in the densely built downtown area, with a mix of commercial, institutional, and residential buildings in the immediate vicinity. Located on major thoroughfare of Essex Street (Route 22), which leads from Cabot Street to Wenham.

Photograph



South and east (façade) elevations

Locus Map (north at top)



Recorded by: Wendy Frontiero and Pamela Hartford

Organization: Beverly Historic District Commission

Date (month / year): September 2016

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

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Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The Beverly Public Library occupies a relatively large, flat parcel in downtown Beverly, comprising more than half of the block between Essex, Dane, Knowlton, and Winter streets. The building faces Beverly Common on the east; wood frame residential buildings constructed mainly in the 19th century surround this lot on the north, west, and south. The property consists of an early 20th century main block facing Essex Street; a much larger, late 20th century rear addition; and a modest surface parking lot on the western side of the lot. Lawn areas with dense plantings of perennials, shrubs, and small trees occupy the setbacks at the front of the parcel.

Originally T-shaped, the main block rises two stories from a raised basement to a flat roof. Walls are clad in brick with a Flemish bond pattern and are trimmed with marble at the raised basement, pilasters, door and window surrounds, ornamental plaques, high entablature and cornice, and roof balustrade. Windows are typically tall rectangular openings with metal sash comprised of a pair of casements and a glazed transom. (Historic photographs suggest that the window openings originally contained triple-hung [2/2/2] sash.) Window openings are trimmed with molded casings, a frieze band, and a shallow hood supported by slender console brackets. Basement windows each contain a pair of small metal windows. Decorative cast iron railings span the base of each first floor window on the three exposed historic elevations; centered above each opening is a horizontal marble plaque in which names of prominent literary and intellectual figures are incised.

The façade consists of three window bays flanking each side of a center entrance pavilion. Double-leaf doors framed by a classical surround are set within a concave curved recess with a half-dome ceiling. The dome is embellished with terracotta moldings in a diamond pattern in which are centered small bas-reliefs in classical motifs. Incised within the solid marble parapet above the entrance pavilion are the words "BEVERLY PUBLIC LIBRARY". The main entrance is accessed by a broad marble staircase that curves out at the bottom and is lined with decorative cast iron railings. The side elevations of the main block each contain one window bay, closely framed by marble pilasters. Nearly all of the original rear elevation is obscured by the modern addition.

Measuring 134 feet long by 78 feet deep, the large rear addition rises two stories from a high, raised basement to a low hip roof clad with standing seam metal. Walls are clad in brick in a running bond pattern and trimmed with cast stone at lower level belt courses and the simple frieze band at the roof edge. Window openings echo the themes of the historic building, with casement windows in a variety of shapes at the basement; tall windows at the first floor with plain concrete surrounds; and small square openings at the upper level. Influenced by the historic east façade, the three-part south elevation of the addition is comprised of two brick wall sections flanking a convexly curved, center entrance pavilion sheathed in glass and cast stone. A double-leaf doorway adjacent to a spacious araway at the basement level is accessed by broad stairs from Winter Street and a ramp and smaller stairs from the parking lot.

Well-preserved and maintained, the Beverly Public Library is an outstanding example of high-style, early 20th century civic architecture in Beverly and the region. Although modestly scaled, it is distinguished by its elegant marble trim at walls, doors, and windows; marble roof balustrade; elaborate main entrance; and ornamental metalwork. Major alterations include replacement window sash and the rear addition, which has been sensitively designed to complement the original building.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

Continuation sheet 1

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One of the earliest public libraries in Massachusetts, the Beverly Public Library was established in 1855, succeeding a private subscription library that was organized in 1802. The Public Library was housed in Town (later City) Hall until 1913, when it moved into the present structure on Essex Street. The site was previously occupied by houses belonging to Horace P. Foster, (on Essex Street), Charles L. Burnham (21 Dane Street), and the heirs of John F. Masury (10-12 Winter Street).

Municipal Documents for 1910 reported that the growing library was overcrowded, and that a site for a new building had already been acquired. In 1909, two of the three lots had been acquired directly by the City. In 1911, the third parcel comprising the library grounds was purchased privately by Katharine Loring, S. Harvey Dow, and William Galloupe and conveyed to the City.

Also in 1911, the city appointed Loring, Galloupe, and Dow to a commission charged with constructing, furnishing, and equipping a new library building, and appropriated \$500 for plans and specifications, \$6,000 for furniture and lighting, and \$100,000 for general construction. Another sum of nearly \$1000 was added from a bequest by the late mayor, John I. Baker. The Beverly Improvement Society donated \$125 to help pay for landscaping the grounds. As noted in the Library Trustees report for 1913, "The Architect of the building was Cass Gilbert of New York. Charles G. Loring, an assistant in his office, had the working out of the details of the plans and the supervision of construction. The general contractor was Norcross Brothers of Worcester" (Municipal Documents, 1913: 101). Gilbert was paid a total of \$651.81 for his work. The Municipal Documents of 1913 provide a detailed description of the history of construction and the appearance and functions of the new library.

The Trustees proudly reported for 1912, during construction, that

"A word of congratulation must bring our report to a close, this touching the satisfactory progress on the new Library building begun in the early summer. The handsome appearance more than fulfils [sic] the promise of the design of the architect, Cass Gilbert. The Commission in whose charge the enterprise has been placed, includes Miss Loring as representative of the Trustees; and their oversight has been assiduous and effective.

"The building, which will accommodate 80,000 volumes, will be completed by the first of April; and, with a month more allowed for furnishing and the moving of books, will be open to the use of the public by June first...

"It is pleasant also to bear in mind that the city has land enough adjacent to extend the stack rooms to double their present capacity.

"Altogether we may felicitate the citizens of Beverly on the approach toward completion of a Library building for which the people have long waited and of which we shall be very justly proud." (Municipal Documents, 1912: 135)

Photographs of the Beverly Public Library were prominently featured in *The Brickbuilder* magazine in June 1914, followed by a full page, illustrated article in the *North Shore Breeze* on December 15, 1914.

Library trustee and Building Commissioner Katharine Peabody Loring (1849-1943) was a daughter of Caleb William Loring (1819-1897) and his wife Elizabeth Smith Peabody Loring (1822-1869). The wealthy, socially prominent, and philanthropic Loring family built some of the earliest summer estates in Pride's Crossing, beginning in 1846; by 1872, Caleb and his two unmarried daughters were living in Beverly year-round.

In addition to their interests in music, literature, and art (and their associations with many leading figures in those fields), the Loring sisters were energetically involved in Beverly's civic affairs and a variety of social causes. Katharine served as a trustee of the Beverly Public Library for forty years and as president of the Beverly Historical Society from 1918-41.

Cass Gilbert's project architect for the Beverly Public Library was Katharine Loring's first cousin, Charles Greely Loring (1881-1966). Born in Pride's Crossing, Charles was the son of Charles Greely Loring II (1828-1907) and Mary Hopkins Loring. He was graduated from Harvard in 1903 and MIT in 1906, worked in the Boston office of prominent Boston architect Guy Lowell, studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, and was afterwards employed in the New York City office of architect Cass Gilbert. From 1913 to 1919, he was in partnership with Joseph Daniels Leland III, in which time they designed the new Beverly Farms Library (24 Vine Street; 1916; see form).

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Gilbert (1858-1934) was one of the most celebrated architects in America in the early 20th century, specializing in public buildings. After training in an architectural firm in St. Paul, Minnesota, he completed a program at MIT, traveled and studied in Europe, and worked for a short time in the firm of McKim, Mead & White in New York City. Gilbert was in partnership with James Knox Taylor from 1882 to 1892 before setting up his own practice in St. Paul. After winning a competition for the New York Custom House around 1905, he moved his office to New York City. Among Gilbert's outstanding works are the Minnesota State Capitol (ca. 1896), Central Public Library in St. Louis (1908-12), Woolworth Building in New York City (1911-13), the Detroit Public Library (1914), U.S. Treasury Annex in Washington, D.C. (1918-19), West Virginia State Capitol (1928-32), and the Supreme Court Building in Washington, D.C. (1933-35). Gilbert was an early member of the American Institute of Architects, for which he served as president; was a co-founder and president of the Architectural League of New York; was appointed Chairman of the Council of Fine Arts by President Theodore Roosevelt; and served on the National Commission of Fine Arts under Presidents Taft and Wilson.

The Beverly Public Library was sympathetically renovated and enlarged in 1993 for an estimated cost of nearly \$4.3 million, Anthony Tappe, architect. The property was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1984 as part of the Beverly Center Historic District.

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SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



East (façade) and north elevations



West and south elevations



Detail of main entrance on east (façade) elevation