

Barber Memorial Building

The Barber Memorial Building houses the Avon Free Library, an organization that had early beginnings in 1805, and by 1919 was established as the first free library in Livingston County.



Aaron Barber III

Aaron Barber III (1836 – 1925), a prominent Avon resident¹, took great interest in the library. As the need for space grew, he offered rental space in the Boorman House at 143 Genesee Street in the village of Avon (present site of the Barber Memorial Building), which he owned at the time. When Aaron Barber died in 1925, he left \$45,000 in his will to build a new library on the site of the Boorman House, and also an endowment of \$15,000 to maintain the building.

Designing the Georgian Revival style building began in 1926 with the Rochester architecture firm Arnold & Stern, who had also designed the Pittsford Library, Leroy Library, and the Hiram Sibley Building in Rochester. Local builder Fred Davis was contracted to construct the one story rectangular brick building. On September 15, 1927 Miss Pierpont, one of the original members of the Library Board, laid the cornerstone of the new building which held an airtight box containing a photograph of the Aaron Barber, coins, stamps, and other historical papers.²

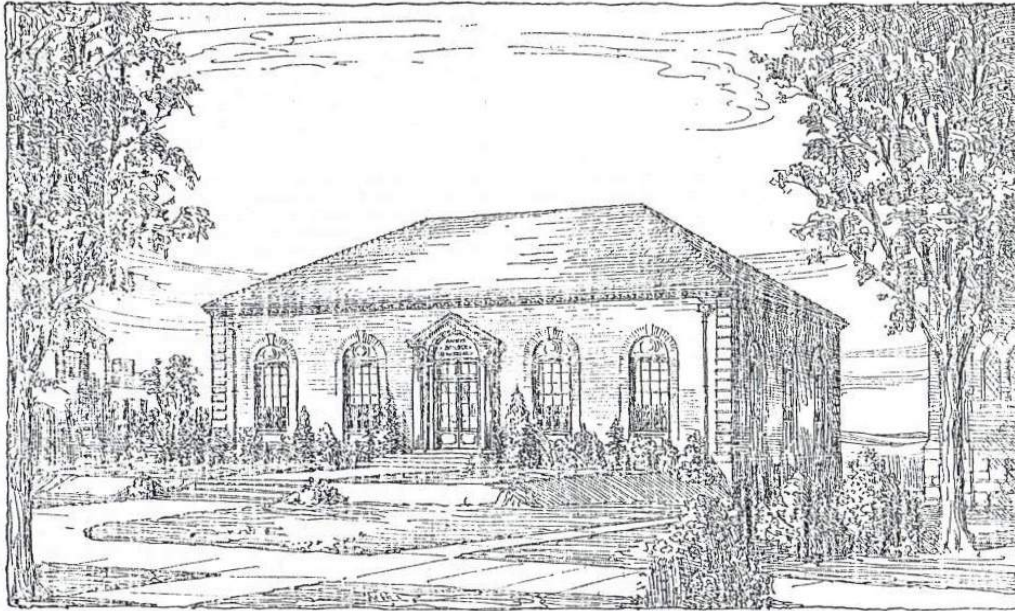


Construction of the Barber Memorial Building at 143 Genesee Street, 1927

Source: Town of Avon Historian Maureen Kingston

The official opening of the Barber Memorial Building was April 12, 1928.

Avon Free Library



OPENING OF BARBER MEMORIAL BUILDING
APRIL 12, 1928

Avon Free Library

The Barber Memorial Library is the culmination of seventeen years of library planning. In 1911 on the lawn of the Flisk home a small group of Avon people first discussed the organization of a free library.

Plans went awry. Three years later, however, on January 5, 1914, a real step was taken in the direction of the formation of a library. At a meeting in the Presbyterian church it was decided to elect six trustees and to go ahead with the important project.

The six pioneers were Henry E. Stevens, Miss Annie E. Pierpont, Miss Ruth E. Frost, Mrs. Howard R. Gibson, Donald M. Lewis and Mortimer D. Gould. Mr. Stevens was chosen president and Miss Frost was named librarian.

A few months later a room in the Babcock Building was rented and an application was made to the state for a charter, an organizer, and for a grant of one hundred dollars for books.

In September of 1914 the books which had been acquired were arranged under the supervision of the state library organizer. The regents voted to register Avon Free Library on May 25, 1916.

In November Miss Frost tendered her resignation as librarian and later Miss Minnie Hocmer was engaged on a paid basis. She was succeeded in 1919 by Miss Gertrude Hocmer, the present librarian.

The presidents of the trustees have been: Henry E. Stevens, William V. Sackett, Rev. Charles W. Taylor, Mrs. Charles B. Gilbert, Mrs. Alexander Russell, Mrs. Walter Clark, and Mrs. Henry R. Seldon.

The Will of Aaron Barber, late President of the State Bank of Avon, made provision for the erection of a building, its complete equipment and also provided \$15,000 for endowment. During his life Mr. Barber acted as a member of the Advisory Board of the Library, provided the residence in which the Library has recently been housed and as a result of his vision this building now stands.

In February, 1928, the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York was petitioned to amend the absolute charter of January 1, 1921, to permit the corporation to continue and maintain a circulating library and reading room and do kindred work under the name of the "Avon Free Library" and in accordance with the Barber Will.

The memorial building is now opened to the public. Avon has the opportunity of making the library the center of all kinds of healthy community activity.

Program

AFTERNOON

3:30—5:30. Open for Inspection.

EVENING

7:30—8:30. Reception to Public.

8:30 Address. *Dr. F. L. Tolman, Director of Library Extension Division,
State Department of Education.*

Presentation of Deed. *Mr. William H. Stachel, Trust Officer,
Security Trust Co. of Rochester.*

Acceptance of Deed. *Mrs. Henry R. Selden, President of Avon
Free Library.*

Informal Social Hour and Inspection of Building.

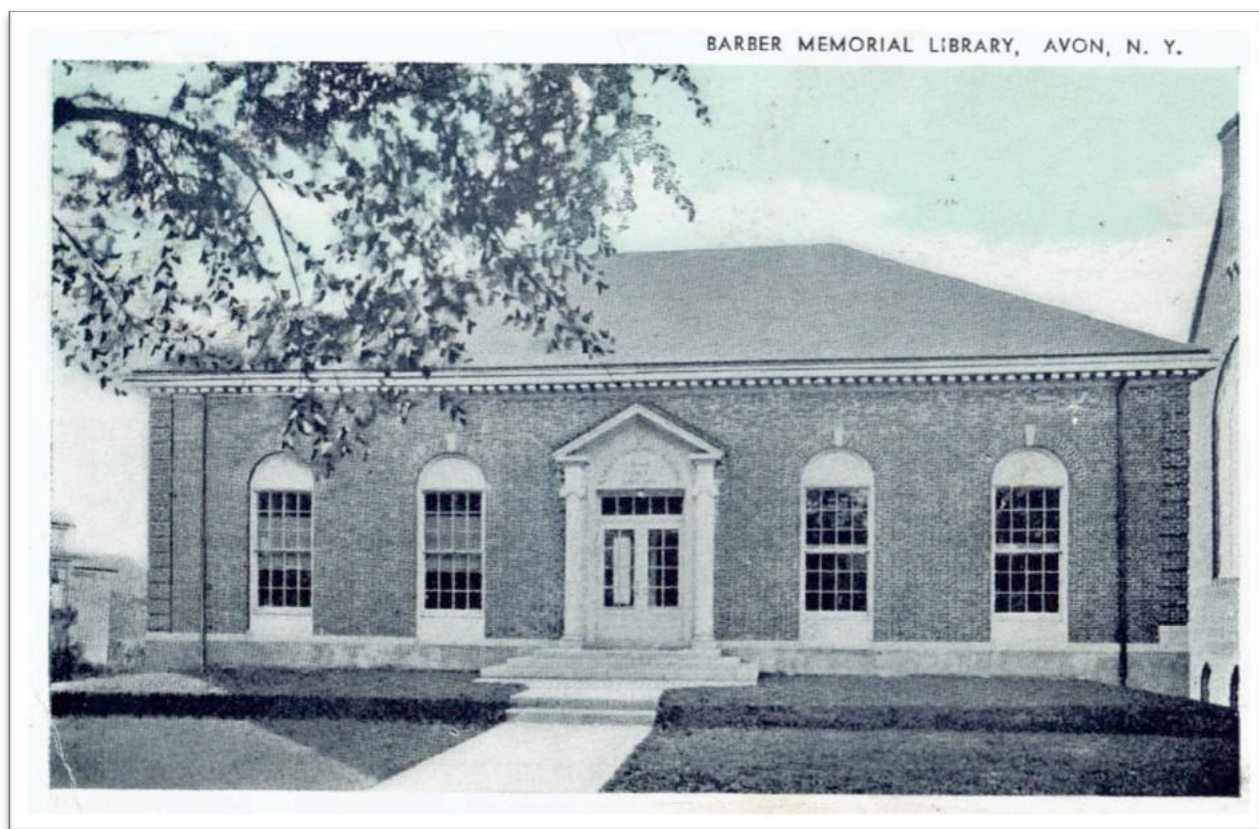
Officers and Trustees of Avon Free Library

President—Mrs. Henry R. Selden Vice-President—Miss Harriet Nisbet
Secretary—Mrs. C. B. Gilbert Treasurer—Miss Annie E. Pierpont
Harold B. Gilbert, Mrs. W. W. Farnum
Librarian—Miss Gertrude Hocmer

List of Members

Rev. & Mrs. J. W. Allatt	Miss Anna A. Frisbee	Mr. Henry Leighton	Miss Mabel Simmons
Mr. R. S. Allison	Dr. Charles N. Frost	Mrs. Arabella Leighton	Mrs. F. A. Somers
Mr. & Mrs. Morton Amond	Mr. & Mrs. John Garvey	Mrs. Samuel Leighton	Mrs. W. O. Soper
Rev. H. P. V. Bogue	Mrs. Charles Gilbert	Miss Agnes Lynn	Dr. and Mrs. Squires
Mr. & Mrs. N. J. Boden	Mr. & Mrs. H. B. Gilbert	Mrs. Wm. J. Mairs	Mr. & Mrs. T. V. Stephenson
Mr. J. C. Bohan	Donald Gilbert	Mrs. A. H. McVean	Mr. and Mrs. H. E. Stevens
Dr. P. C. Bradley	Paul Gilbert	Mr. & Mrs. F. S. McAllister	Miss Eleanor Stevens
Miss Jane E. Brewster	Mrs. Virginia Glover	Rev. M. D. MacLeod	Mr. Paul Strassenburgh
Mr. Clifton Brooks	Mrs. Louis Goff	Mrs. Martha McKinney	Isabelle S. Sutton
Mr. Stephen M. Browne	Mrs. Benjamin Green	Marion McLaughlin	Mrs. C. A. Thompson
Mr. Howard Carpenter	Mrs. Frank R. Green	Mr. & Mrs. J. W. Morris	Mr. Lewis Tripp
Mrs. J. D. Carson	Mr. & Mrs. O. H. Gott	Mrs. D. A. Milliman	Mr. Frank Tuma
Mr. & Mrs. J. D. Carson	Virginia Gott	Miss Beatie Miller	Mrs. Wm. Twamley
Miss Margaret Carson	Mrs. Wm. Gregg	Mr. Edward Moss	Mr. A. C. Van Allen
Miss Jean Carson	Mr. & Mrs. W. E. Hall	Mr. & Mrs. E. D. Mulligan	M. C. Watkins & Co.
Miss Katherine Carson	Edna M. Hargrove	Miss Harriet Nisbet	Miss Florence Wright
Miss Elma Carter	Miss Adda Hart	Miss Nancy Nisbet	Mrs. Theodore Wright
Mr. & Mrs. L. M. Chiles	Miss Blanche Hess	Miss Anna O'Brien	Mr. W. J. Weed
Dr. & Mrs. F. E. Cleaver	Mr. and Mrs. C. D. Hess	Miss Ruth Owen	Mrs. J. L. Westfall
Miss Margaret Cleaver	Mrs. Frances Hocmer	Dr. & Mrs. W. A. Parish	Mr. & Mrs. John Westfall
Miss Mary Cleaver	Miss Gertrude Hocmer	Mr. & Mrs. C. J. Prosser	Mr. & Mrs. W. A. Wheeler
Mrs. Belle Bennett Clark	Mr. Warren Hocmer	Mrs. R. S. Paviour	Miss Mary E. Whiting
Mr. & Mrs. Wm. H. Clark	Mr. & Mrs. W. W. Hogmire	Mrs. E. C. Perry	Mr. & Mrs. Chas. F. Whiting
Mr. & Mrs. W. A. Clark	Mrs. C. F. Holcombe	Miss Annie E. Pierpont	Mr. Harold Whiting
Dr. & Mrs. G. R. Collins	Dewey Holcombe	Mr. & Mrs. E. C. Plimpton	Mrs. Harry Whitmore
Mrs. Carrie Culley	Shelby Holcombe	Mrs. J. C. Preston	Marion Whitmore
Mrs. W. E. Dana	Mr. & Mrs. F. E. Hovey	Miss Isabel Puffer	Mildred Whitmore
Mr. & Mrs. C. T. Davin	Mr. & Mrs. R. E. Hovey	Miss L. D. Puffer	Mrs. Wm. Whyland
Mr. & Mrs. H. A. Dooper	Estella Hovey	Mrs. G. H. Root	Mrs. Ellen P. Wingate
Mrs. Robert Downing	Mr. & Mrs. Wm. Her	Mr. & Mrs. John J. Sackett	Mrs. Fred Woodruff
Mr. Charles H. Eggleston	Mr. & Mrs. J. F. Kellogg	Mr. W. V. Sackett	Mrs. Rose A. Worsfold
Miss M. Eggleston	Mr. & Mrs. S. S. Lacy	Mr. & Mrs. Henry R. Selden	Miss Margaret McGinty
Mr. & Mrs. Easterbrook	Miss Charlotte A. Lacy	Miss Viola Schaefer	Mr. & Mrs. Wilbert J. Arnold
Mr. & Mrs. W. H. Farnum	Mr. & Mrs. J. J. Lacy	Mrs. W. F. Sheldon	June Gilbert
Mr. & Mrs. W. W. Farnum			Mrs. Howard Gibson

Architectural features include a pargeoted foundation and a gable roof. Located at the eaves beneath the Vermont slate roof are classic dentils. The primary windows are tall, double-hung sash with multi-light glazing, rectangular wooden panels at their bases, and round-arched transoms above. The corners of the building are accentuated by brick quoins. The main entrance features Roman Ionic columns and a triangular pediment above.



Barber Memorial Building, *postcard*, circa 1942

Source: Avon Preservation and Historical Society

Improvements to the building, including a handicap entrance and interior improvements were completed between 1999 and 2004. The scale, design, materials, setting and association makes the Avon Free Library building an important visual and architectural landmark in the community.³ Honoring its historic significance, the Barber Memorial Building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2008.

-APHS member, Clara Mulligan
March 2016

¹ See “Aaron Barber” at www.avonpreservation.org, “Significant People”

² *The History of the Avon Free Library*, Henrietta S. Cushing

³ *Building-Structure Inventory Form*, 1997, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation