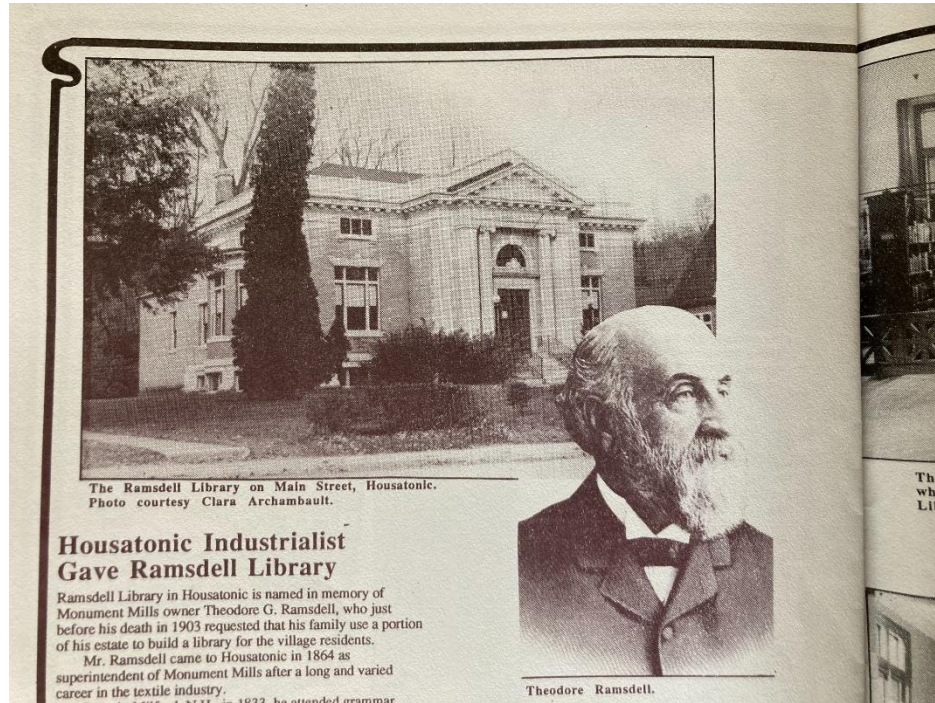


# A Brief History of Ramsdell Public Library





Ramsdell was built with a bequest from Theodore G. Ramsdell of Monument Mills and cost \$40,000 in 1908. It is located on the same plot of land as Housatonic's first building circa 1809.

Ramsdell shares many characteristics of a Carnegie Library as it was built during the same period.

ashland, ma



clinton, ma



rockland, ma



taunton, ma



# Ramsdell has a twin!



**Ramsdell Library | Housatonic, MA**

Architect: McLean + Wright

1908



Carnegie Public Library, West Somerville, Mass.

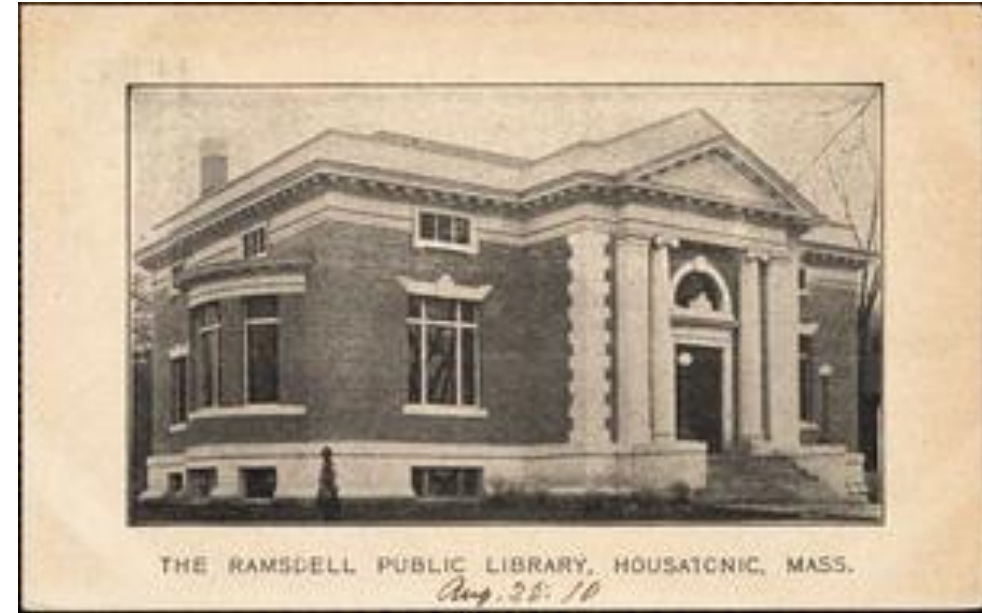
**West Branch Library | Somerville, MA**

Architect: McLean + Wright

1909

**“In carrying out his (Theodore G. Ramsdell’s) wishes we have tried to follow the principle and practice of his life work, which was to build not only for the present, but for many years to come...”**

-T. Ellis Ramsdell, son of Theodore



**“The construction of the library in Housatonic was a watershed event,...**

**It was lost on no one in town that the new library represented culture and progress and considerable public improvement.”**

-US Department of Interior

**The *Berkshire Courier* advertised that the new library in Housatonic was offering entertainment as part of the “Library Course” in the new building.**

*October 31, 1907*

**“In addition to conventional library use, there have been a number of social uses for the library building, as is common in small towns. The top floor of the library has a stage and was used for plays, readings, and dances for many decades. In addition, residents had free use of a loom owned by the library.”**

- US Dept. of Interior National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**“Books are NOT going away. Usage is changing though, and collections need to align to those changes in the community.”**

- KBA Ramsdell Program and Facility Vision 2018



Bowling was a popular pastime with men and women at the Carnegie Library in Homestead and drew a number of spectators, as seen in this undated photograph. (Courtesy of Carnegie Library of Homestead.)

Then and now: Libraries are more than books.



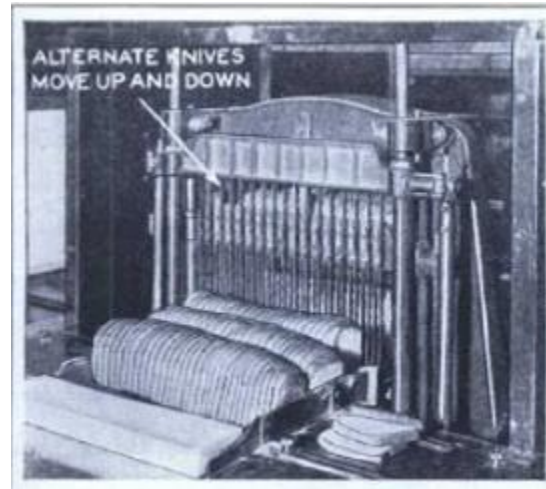
Helsinki Library



Kindergarten on  
the second floor.

**I PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE:** Most of them did as the new PTA sponsored preschool classes opened in Ramsdell Public Library Housatonic. In the front row are David Carlotto, Paul Simonelli, Charles Lord; second row, Robert Barnes, Paul Krzynowek, Stephen Seward, Richard Spadaccini, Elaine Alarie, Elizabeth-Ann Marby, Carolyn Kinne, Minnie Pendlebury, Mary-Anne Murray, Ruth Andrew, Betsy Sullivan, Jay Carlotto, James Storti, Diane Kirkbride; back row, Arthur Lovato, John Murray, Andrew Marby, Frank Plona, Carl Pendlebury, Betty Seward, David Ryan, Eileen Plona and Sandra Maglalski. Mrs. Raymond Moulthrop is instructor.

The largest change to Ramsdell was a rear addition completed in 1930, almost 100 years ago. Ramsdell's last significant building renovation occurred on the dawn of the Great Depression, as penicillin was developed and a machine to slice bread was invented.



In 2009 discussion began in earnest regarding the future of Ramsdell. The report "Closure, Continuance or Reimagine Ramsdell" stated,

"An out of date building make(s) the Town appear to be wedded to its past rather than interested in moving forward."



# Ramsdell Library Renovation Project

## Closure, continuance or reimagining



[Wikimedia Commons.](#)

A 2009 report for the  
Board of Selectmen,  
Finance Committee,  
and  
Library Trustees  
of the  
Town of Great  
Barrington



In 2010 the question of closure was put to the voters, who overwhelmingly defeated it. However since 2010 minimal work has been done on the building.

*More information about ongoing efforts to renovate Ramsdell, including the current Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program grant application process and chronology, can be found on the Ramsdell Building Project webpage.*