



BETHEL PUBLIC LIBRARY

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www.bethellibrary.org

BETHEL PUBLIC LIBRARY SEELYE FAMILY LOCAL HISTORY ROOM POLICY

On June 24, 1914, the Seelye Family most generously presented to the town of Bethel, the homestead of the late Hannah H. Seelye, under conditions that the house, or any building erected in its place, shall be held in perpetuity for library purposes and as a perpetual memorial to the late Seth and Abigail Seelye. The home was built in 1842 and has served as the Town's library since 1914. A memorial plaque to Seth and Abigail Seelye is placed over the fireplace.

The old house was renovated in 1954, and a two-story addition was put onto the original home in 1967. In 1977, the Seelye homestead was named to the National Register of Historic Places. The fine Greek Revival architecture had always marked the Library as a focal point in the town, and it has helped to preserve the old New England small town charm and character of Bethel.

During phase one of the 2005 construction project which replaced the 1967 addition with a larger one, the Seelye House underwent minor renovations. Afterwards, most of the space was used for staff offices awaiting completion of the second floor of the addition. During this time the Seelye Room was closed to the public for more than nine years.

The Seelye Family Local History Room was opened once again in 2013. This lovely room, once the original living room when occupied by the Seelye Family, served for many years as the main library and then as the Library's reference room after the 1967 addition was built.

Today, this quiet study room, with restored windows and refinished floors and staircase, has reproduction hanging light pendants, similar to those that appear in earlier photographs, custom millwork cabinetry that houses the Local History Collection, comfortable seating, a table and chairs, and a work counter.

Also back home in the Seelye Room is the recently renovated Vaghi Desk, as it is affectionately called. The desk was designed, crafted and built for the Library around 1925 by Joseph P. Vaghi of Bethel and has been used since then, almost without interruption, as a public service desk. The desk was redesigned and restored in 2012 by Jerry Shike of Bethel.

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The 2012 restoration and renovation of the Seelye Family Local History Room were generously sponsored by the John Rubino Family and the Local History Collection by Janet Patzold. The rehabilitation of the windows and selected interior historic features in the Seelye House were financed, in part, by the State of Connecticut, utilizing Community Investment Act funds administered by the Department of Economic and Community Development. Additional renovations made in the Seelye House were funded, in part, by a grant received from the Department of Economic and Community Development and by the Bethel Library Board of Directors through fundraising efforts.

Truly, the Seelye Family Local History Room is and will remain the jewel of the Bethel Public Library for many years to come.

SECTION I: STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Seelye Family Local History Room at the Bethel Public Library is to make available for public research resources on the social, economic, natural, and genealogic history, as well as community and governmental information pertaining to Bethel, Connecticut and its immediate environs, as well as Fairfield County and the State of Connecticut as they pertain to Bethel. The Local History Room is for quiet study, local history research, genealogical research, and small meetings and programs as deemed appropriate by the Library Director and/or the Bethel Public Library Board of Directors.

SECTION II: THE COLLECTION:

The collection may include books, pamphlets, newspapers, periodicals, photographs, diaries, yearbooks, maps, atlases, audio-visual materials, and manuscripts. In addition, resources may be available in microform and online, including Bethel materials posted on the *Treasures of Connecticut Libraries* website. The collection will house books by local authors providing the author or his/her work is deemed important to local history. Emphasis on collecting will be on people, industries, businesses, politics, religion, clubs and other organizations in Bethel, from the earliest recorded history available to the present.

SECTION III: ACQUISITION OF ITEMS:

The Bethel Public Library welcomes donations to the Seelye Family Local History Room. Materials added must be consistent with the collection goals of the Library. The Library accepts materials with the understanding that they become the sole property of the Library and cannot accept materials encumbered with conditions imposed by the donor. The Library may accept materials loaned on a temporary basis for the purpose of display only. The Library reserves the right to refuse material for any reason. In cases where special handling, rebinding or preservation methods are required, the donor may be asked for a donation to help cover costs.

SECTION IV: DEACCESSIONS:

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The Bethel Public Library has the right to dispose of materials as necessary, including returning unwanted portions of a gift to the donor, selling or placing materials in another repository. The Bethel Historical Society will be offered any materials that are being removed from the collection. The decision to remove materials of modest value from the collection will be made by the Library Director. The Library Board of Directors shall be the final authority in removing materials of greater value, such as rare books, manuscripts, etc. Usefulness, physical condition and other criteria will be used to determine whether to keep an item in the collection.

SECTION V: INSURANCE:

Insurance coverage will be provided by the Bethel Public Library's policy as a department of the Town of Bethel.

SECTION VI: CARE OF THE COLLECTION:

Preservation of the existing collection is a priority and a recognized need. All archival materials will be appropriately preserved and protected to the best of the Library's ability and resources. At all times, individuals using the materials in the Seelye Family Local History Room should be aware of their fragility and value.

SECTION VII: ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS:

The Seelye Family Local History Room and collection are available for use by patrons who need a quiet study area or who are doing local history or genealogical research. Access to the room may be restricted to when the Library is open and when staff supervision is available. During other times, materials may be retrieved by staff for use by patrons. Access may also be granted by appointment.

SECTION VIII: SECURITY:

The Seelye Family Local History Room is monitored 24/7 by surveillance cameras. The Local History Room is kept locked when not open to the public. Some of the collection may be housed in locked cabinets.

SECTION IX: POLICY EFFECTIVE DATE, AMENDMENTS, AND REVISIONS

This policy is effective upon approval of the Library Board of Directors. Amendments and/or revisions to this policy shall be formulated and recommended to the Board by the Policy Committee. The policy may then be amended and/or revised at the regular meeting of the Board, following the meeting at which the amendment and/or revision was proposed.

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Approved by the Library Board September 24, 2012