



# BROOKS MEMORIAL LIBRARY

 224 Main Street, Brattleboro, VT 05301

[802-254-5290](tel:802-254-5290)~[info@brookslibraryvt.org](mailto:info@brookslibraryvt.org)

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## **BROOKS MEMORIAL LIBRARY RECEIVES BEQUEST**

The estate of Brattleboro resident Ronald James Read, who passed away in June 2014, has notified the Brooks Memorial Library of a bequest. The unrestricted gift will increase the library's current endowment fund by over \$1.2M.

"The staff, Friends of the Library, volunteers and board are delighted at this great news," noted Jerry Goldberg, President of the Board of Trustees. "Mr. Read's bequest, by far the largest since that made by George J. Brooks in 1886, is a legacy that is far reaching. It will help to guarantee the future viability and sustainability of Brattleboro's public library, an institution much respected by Mr. Read. It is, indeed, his gift to the entire Greater Brattleboro community."

Long-term Library Director Jerry Carbone, added: "In order for the library to prosper in the future it needs all types of support, including tax funding and private fund raising that the Friends of the Library do with its book sales and the newly launched Annual Appeal. The Read bequest will have a transformative impact in assisting with unmet needs that the library has faced over the years with level-funded budgets. It will also go a long way in helping to maintain the quality of collections and programs that have been supported by other bequests for the past 130 years."

Brattleboro has enjoyed continuous library service since 1821, when local citizens created a private lending library. Later, in 1842, to continue to build its collections, it became a subscription library. Finally, in 1882, a group of townspeople created a committee to recommend that Brattleboro's Town Meeting vote Town funds to support a free, public library. This act spurred Brattleboro businessman George J. Brooks--who had built the Brooks House Hotel in 1872--to donate funds to erect the first public library building in Brattleboro. The George J. Brooks Memorial Library was dedicated in 1887 and served Brattleboro's library needs for the next 80 years until the current Brooks Memorial Library building was dedicated.

From its earliest days the library has benefited from private donations. First, in 1852, A.H. Bull provided a gift whose annual interest of \$100 could be used to purchase books. This was followed by gifts from the Davenport, Phelps and Hildreth families. Thus was the library's private endowment fund created.

In 1912 the West Brattleboro family of Charles and Henrietta (Prouty) Loud provided a bequest that added to the original building and also began the tradition of bestowing art, books, memorabilia and other items to what has become a significant art collection. Since 1982 there have been 11 other bequests by local families with names that many



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may recognize: Pierce, McGrew, Rounds, Kristensen, Lever, Stebbins, Roberts, Freeze, Durant, Schorling, and Wojtowitz.

Friends of the Library President Mary Ide said, “Clearly there is a legacy of giving to support this great institution. Although we’re called The Friends, it appears that the idea and reality of a library in Brattleboro has had many friends for many years. Ronald Read joins that illustrious and most generous group.”

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**For more information contact:**

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