

# Wallington Welcomes Their New Library

The Borough of Wallington, Mayor Melissa Dabal and the Library Board of Trustees sponsored a Grand Opening/Ribbon Cutting Ceremony of the Wallington Veterans Memorial Library, 125 Main Avenue, on Friday, June 21, 2024, from 6 to 8 p.m.

The program included tours, kids' crafts, food, entertainment and a children's program featuring Joe Fischer.

Speakers included: Councilwoman Susanne Preinfalk, Ex-officio/President of the Veterans Memorial Library Board of Trustees, Mayor Melissa Dabal and Walter M. Slomienski, Jr., former Mayor and member of Post 2640. The ribbon cutting was performed officially opening the Library. Refreshments were served.

Remarks made by Walter M. Slomienski, Jr., Esq.:

On behalf of all the members of Pavlick Koster VFW Post 2640 and our past members looking down at us this evening, we would like to express our gratitude to Mayor Dabal and members of the governing body for their tribute to the sacrifices that were made by Wallington Veterans for our glorious republic.

The Veterans of Wallington provided this building to the Borough with the expectation that it would house a future Library facility. As time passed we all realized that the Post Home could not be modified to accommodate a Library.

The foresight of the Library Board and the Governing Body conceived a plan that permitted the facility to be developed in the general footprint of our old post building, and retain a room where the past history of the second largest VFW Post in New Jersey could be admired by continuing generations as Wallingtonians.

Not only has the memory of the old post building been preserved, but the monument of the front lawn has been retained. For since the late 1940s to the turn of the century, after the Memorial Day Service, we returned to the monument to render a Salute and remember the name of the Post members who died in the past year while reciting "Post Veteran Accounted for."

As we look at the Wallington Veterans Library, its silent elegance actually speaks to us of the uncommon valor that was a common virtue of the service to our Nation of our Wallington Service Men.

Former Mayor Slomienski also recognized the contribution of Joan Madey:

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knowledge the contribution to the construction of the new Library made by Joan Madey.

Joan was an educated nurse. She originally grew up in the Halstead Avenue/Mercer Street area. She was single, cared for her elderly mother and had no brothers or sisters.

She generously provided a substantial sum that became the seed money for the town to acquire Library funding from the state.

When I recall her, I think of the quote from AESOP, "No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted." Why do I recall this: In her illness, members of the Library staff visited her at her home on Miller Street and always delivered books which the Library aide felt she would be interested in reading. As you can see, she never forgot that gesture.

The John F. Kennedy Memorial Library was temporarily located in tight facilities above the DPW, 92 Hathaway Street, since 1964. For 60 years it provided basic services to 1,200 to 1,500 patrons annually.

A decade after a \$30,000 feasibility study and \$10,000 in architectural renderings were completed to relocate to the VFW, the town bought the property in 2006 for \$235,000, a fraction of what the Veterans were offered. Due to storms Irene and Sandy, the study and drawings had to be redone to adjust for the flood plain.

On November 11, 2021, the official ground breaking ceremony was held. (See *The Gazette Newspaper, December 2021, page 27*).

The Wallington Fire Department used the building for drills and training prior to being demolished on April 27, 2022. (See *The Gazette Newspaper, June 2022, page 15*).

The original fireplace was salvaged and integrated into the new building, with a painting of the old Post home placed above it. A separate room was set aside for the Post memorabilia, but has yet to be outfitted.

Contractors moved the Library contents between June 7 to June 15, 2024.

Arcari + Iovino Architects designed the 6,000 square foot Library as a light-filled open space that can be easily reconfigured for a variety of uses. Dedicated spaces for children, young adults, quiet reading, and computer areas will allow The Library to expand its array of services to the community.

This project was supported by funds from the New Jersey Library Construction Bond Act, administered by the New Jersey State Library. ###

