



The Public Library of New London received its start in 1876, with a bequest from successful New London whaling, sealing and shipping merchant, Henry P. Haven. Mr. Haven's \$65,000 gift was instrumental in the construction of the original 4,000 square foot library building, and initiating a book collection which was opened to the public in July, 1891.

The building design was executed by the firm of Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge of Boston from the original plans of the well-known architect Henry Hobson Richardson.

The original building is in the Romanesque design and is constructed of pink granite from Worcester, This granite structure also has Kibbe sandstone trimmings.

The building is a parallelogram in shape and is 40 feet by 90 feet with a gable covering the porch, which is entered by three arches from Huntington Street and one from State Street. The ceiling of the porch is formed of three groined vaults, which add to its stability.

At the peak of the porch's roof is a tympanum of stone on which is carved the coat of arms of the City of New London – a ship under full sail.

Inserted in a panel near an entrance to the library there is a bronze relief of Henry P. Haven, executed by the sculptor Augustus St. Gaudens, whose statues of famous men are in several parks in the United States.

The main room contains a carved stone fireplace and well-rubbed, quartered oak paneling. The paneling of oak runs around the room at the height of 13 feet and the ceiling is also paneled between the heavy oak beams.

In 1974, the library added a modern 15,000 square foot building at the existing site. Further renovations to create more space for increased collections needs and administrative offices were concluded as of March 2001. Renovations to the Children's area and the meeting rooms were made in 2006.



## History of the Sculpture

“Leading up to the sculpture's installation and subsequent dedication planned for September 29, 1979, McCloy worked as sculptor, plumber, handyman, and philanthropist. Though it seems the plumbing was never properly installed as the fountain may have always leaked.

The sculpture was planned as a gift of the Isser family to the Public Library of New London in memory of the late Isser Gruskin, an attorney and prominent city resident. Isser's widow, Mildred Gruskin, and his brother, attorney Samuel Gruskin, spoke at the dedication ceremony at the public library about the influence of libraries on Isser as an immigrant boy.

McCloy, then 66, said the plan for the sculpture was that it wouldn't cost him anything. He brought the sculpture from his home in Uncasville to the library, where it rests on the same New Hampshire granite as the stone exterior of the library.

McCloy also says the sculpture has two main themes: New London's commercial and literary history — whales and water represent the seafaring tradition intertwined with a book symbolizing education. The whale's sharp teeth should not be mistaken for those of a shark.

During installation, McCloy said passersby stopped to ask him about the meaning of the sculpture.

An article in *The Day* (1/1/1987) reports that McCloy was having a retrospective exhibition of his work at Lyman Allyn. McCloy's obituary was published in *The Day* on 6/6/2000.

There is a lot more information about McCloy in his faculty file in the archives in Shain.”

—Andrew Lopez, Research Support Librarian and Government Documents Coordinator, Charles E. Shain Library, Connecticut College

Collective Photo Gallery:

- New London Day article from 8/23/1979: *Fountain Flows from Sculptor*



- New London Day article from 10/2/1979: *Gruskin Fountain Dedicated in New London*



- The invitation card used for the dedication ceremony at the Public Library of New London: 9/23/1979

