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THE STORY: SHERBORN LIBRARY BEECH TREE

SHERBORN, MA June 17, 2016. A familiar sight to all who pass through Sherborn, the majestic European beech tree stands on Sherborn's green, welcoming patrons to our town's public library. Set at the base of this landmark tree, a bronze plaque reads, "Fagus sylvatica 'atropunicea.' Common name: Purple Beech."

According to Sherborn library director Elizabeth Johnston, "The purple beech tree was planted in March 1876, so that it is now 140 years old, not including the year or years it may have on its dendrochronology from the nursery." In an article written for *Among Friends*, Johnston noted that, "Town historian Betsy Johnson responded a few years ago to a Boston Globe Q&A history column that sought information on the tree. Betsy reported: 'the European purple beech tree was planted... when the site of the current library was occupied by a public school. It was one of 16 trees purchased by the school's principal from Nonantum Hill Nursery in Brighton. Most of the trees cost \$1, but the European purple beech tree cost \$4, which was equivalent to about four days' pay. That tree is the only one of the 16 still standing. It was a gift of the graduating class of Sawin Academy-Dowse High School. That school, the first public high school in Sherborn, was built in 1858 with funds given to the Town by Natick resident Martha Sawin and Cambridgeport bookbinder Thomas Dowse, both of whom had roots in Sherborn.'"

Inspired by the town's familiar purple beech tree, students at the local Pine Hill School created a colorful rendering of the tree at the popular "maker space" area located in the elementary school's media center. Pine Hill School librarian Laurie Ryan, along with Pine Hill art teacher Sarah Richards, guided students through the process of assembling the tree's highly stylized leaves, which they learned resemble the abstract works of Russian painter and art theorist Wassily Kandinsky.

"Students have the opportunity to work freely in our maker space, which was set up in the media center several years ago to encourage collaboration, creativity, invention and learning," said Pine Hill librarian Laurie Ryan. Pine Hill art teacher Sarah Richards, who coordinated with Sherborn Library Trustees to provide materials for this unique project, added, "We appreciate the connection between the school and town libraries... this art project underscores that meaningful relationship and was lots of fun, too!"

Beside the purple beech tree, work on the Sherborn library renovation and expansion project is now moving at a rapid pace in the Design Development Phase. The Library Building Committee (LBC) and subgroups (interior design, technology, etc.), along with Library Trustees and library staff are

working closely with the owner's project manager, Design Technique, Inc., led by John Sayre-Scibona, and the project designers, Beacon Architectural Associates and Richard Smith, to finish design details. The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners is also coordinating closely on the project to ensure the new library design meets requirements outlined in the original library grant application. Once the final design is approved, the designers will move ahead to create Construction Documents, proceed to the Public Municipal Bid Process and finally the Construction phase.

During construction, the library will be relocated to the first floor of the Sherborn Community Center. "Although the overall collection will be greatly reduced and some programs may be modified to accommodate the 'temporary space,'" said Mary Moore, Chair of the Library Trustees, "it promises to be a comfortable place where residents can continue to gather, read, borrow and learn." Residents can also continue to take advantage of Sherborn's membership in the Minuteman Network, which consists of 36 public and 7 college libraries in Metrowest.

Library Trustees are grateful to the Sherborn Community Center Foundation for making the space available. The Trustees anticipate relocation will take place in late September and currently expect that the renovated and expanded library will be ready to open to the public late-2017.

For updated FAQs on the library project and planned relocation, to view renderings, to review minutes from the LBC and Trustee meetings, and to read library director Elizabeth Johnston's *Among Friends* article in its entirety, please visit the library website at library.sherbornma.org.

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