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Lithgow Public Library

45 Winthrop Street, Augusta

130th Anniversary Newsletter 2026

www.lithgowlibrary.org

LITHGOW PUBLIC LIBRARY

Library Hours:
Monday - Thursday:
9 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Friday: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Saturday: 9 a.m. to Noon

(207)-626-2415

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Dear Patron-

The staff of Lithgow Library invite you to celebrate the library's 130th anniversary!

The Library was dedicated and opened on the 3rd of February in 1896, and its history is an important one of a strong private public partnership that still exists today.

The roots of the library began in 1872, when Maine Governor Sidney Perham approved a Private and Special Law that incorporated the Augusta Literary and Library Association, whose incorporators included Llewelyn Lithgow. The precursor to the Association was a group known as the Shakespeare Society.

Llewellyn Lithgow died suddenly on June 22, 1881 and his will included a bequest of $20,000 to the city of Augusta for the purpose of establishing a public library in the city. A year later, the property and collection of the Augusta Literary and Library Association was transferred to the newly constituted Trustees of Lithgow Library and Reading Room. This governing body of the library was created by a Special and Private Law of the Maine Legislature. The Trustees began the search for an appropriate site and design for the city's new library. In December of 1888, the Trustees purchased the Cushnoc House property at the corner of State and Winthrop Street.

Llewelyn's bequest, a gift from Andrew Carnegie, and funds from local donors provided the library Board of Trustees with financing to construct a landmark public library building, designed by Joseph Ladd Neal and partner, S. Alfred Hopkins.

Ground was broken in May of 1894, and a month later, with much fanfare, the cornerstones for both the library and the Masonic Temple on Water Street were laid. An appropriation by the City of Augusta for $1000 was presented and unanimously approved at the Board of Trustee meeting on October 18, 1895. It was based on the condition that the library be free to all residents of Augusta. It was accepted by the City of Augusta.

Construction lasted 20 months, and the building was completed by January of 1896. The books previously housed at the Bradbury Block on Water Street were moved to their new home at 45 Winthrop Street. The library was expanded twice; once in the late 1970s, and again in 2016. In 1896, the library had 6,000 books in its collection. By 2016, the expanded library more than doubled in size and included more than 65,000 items, and our collection continues to grow and reflect the interests and needs of our community and library members.

Please join us for programming celebrating the library throughout this year!

Sincerely,
Sarah Schultz-Nielsen, Library Director
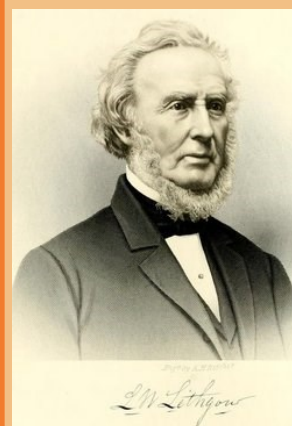
130th Anniversary Kick-Off

Tuesday February 3rd All Day,
while supplies last

130 years ago today, the Trustees of the Lithgow Library and Reading Room dedicated the building as the first public library of Augusta. We will kick off our anniversary with a photo op with founder Llewelyn W. Lithgow. We encourage visitors to visit the timeline of the library on the Mezzanine.

The first 75 people to borrow library items will receive a frameable copy of the original rules of the library.

Celebrate with us!

Llewelyn Lithgow:
A Short Bio

Llewelyn Lithgow was described as "...a gentleman of the old school; to urbane manners and a genial disposition he united a broad, public spirit, and great probity of character, qualities which won for him universal confidence and respect."
Credit: Charles Nash, "The Lithgow Library and Reading Room," 1897.

Llewellyn Lithgow was born on December 25, 1796 in Dresden, Maine. He was the son of James Noble Lithgow and Ann Gardiner Lithgow. He moved to Augusta in 1839 and became a successful merchant. Mr. Lithgow was married twice. He married his first wife, Mary Bowman in 1825. They had one daughter, Annie Lithgow. After Mary's death in 1868, he married Paulina Child in 1869. He died suddenly in 1881, and is buried in Dresden Mills at the Pine Grove Cemetery.
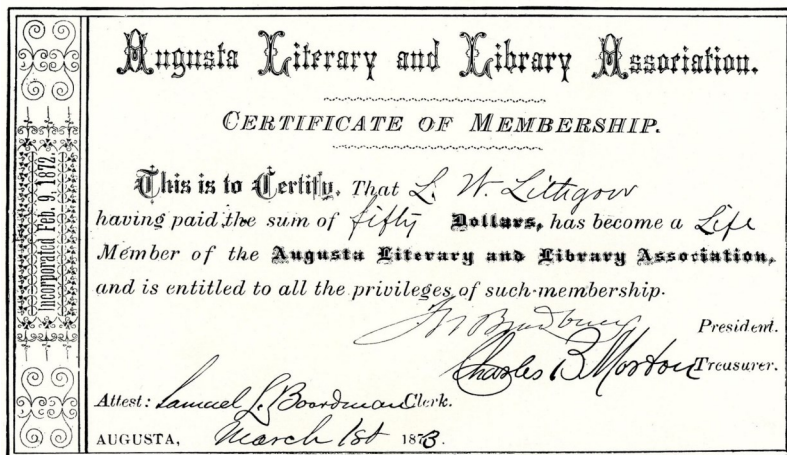
In December of 1888, the Trustees purchased the Cushnoc House property at the corner of State and Winthrop Street. Here is a view of Winthrop Hill from State Street, where the library now stands on the right.

130th Reception
Saturday, April 25th at 10 a.m.
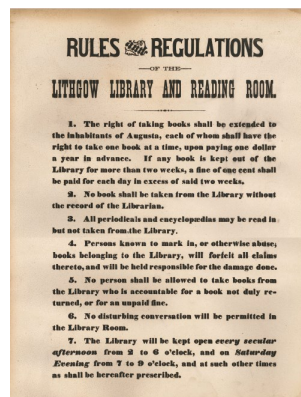Community Meeting Room

Please join us for cake, beverages, speeches, a slide show on the TV of the library over the years, and self-guided tours of the library. We will also have library ephemera on display!

The Library's cornerstone was laid on June 14th, 1894.

How it All Began:
The History of Lithgow Library
Tuesday, February 24th at 3 p.m.
Community Meeting Room

Retired Library Director Betsy Pohl will give a talk on the history of the library, from its early beginnings on Water Street to the expanded, renovated facility we enjoy today.

Carpenters finished the interior of the book room with quartered oak. ca. 1895

Llewelyn Lithgow was a lifetime member of the Augusta Literary and Library Association, the precursor to Lithgow Library.

Lithgow Library Walking Tour
Thursday April 23rd 3 p.m.
(weather permitting)

Library Director Sarah Schultz-Nielsen will lead a tour, stopping at the places still standing that are connected to Llewelyn Lithgow and the Library. Please wear comfortable clothing. Walk is approximately 1 mile. We will meet in the lobby of the library.

Lithgow Library's original Rules & Regulations. (left)

Carved fireplace medallion of Maine's state seal. (right)