

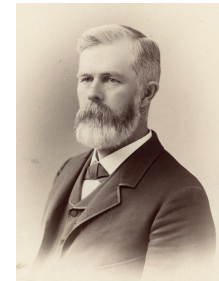
To celebrate our 25th anniversary [in 2018], we've created a logo for the Folklife Center in Glens Falls. It's a simple design – our name linked with Crandall Public Library and a five pointed star, tipped to soar. Yet, at closer look, it reflects a larger community heritage.

This year [2018] is also the 125th anniversary of our parent organization, Crandall Public Library, its birth occurring in 1892-1893, thanks to the combined efforts of a minister, an educator, a historian, and a wealthy businessman.



The idea for a community library was promoted well before its inception by Rev. George B. Gow (1832–1913). He was a Baptist minister and founder of the Glens Falls Lyceum, where local questions were discussed before large audiences, and later, in the local newspapers. Gow planted the seed, which would be sown as Crandall Free Library, in a paper read before the Lyceum several years before its inception. Rev. Gow would become the first president of the Library Trustees.

The educator, Sherman Williams (1846–1923) came to Glens Falls as the school superintendent, who built the community's modern school system, and developed a summer school for teachers from around the country – both models for the state. His interest in the development and influence of libraries drove him to find a benefactor in Henry Crandall and to the creation of the Crandall Trust. Dr. Williams became Chief of Schools Libraries Division in the State Department of Education and was an officer of the Library Trustees for some 30 years.



The historian, James A. Holden (1861-1918) was a prolific writer on historical topics and a charter member of the New York State Historical Association. He was also a newspaper editor, manager of the Empire Theatre, author of the charter for the City of Glens Falls, and an officer in many local organizations. He deposited his books and papers at Crandall Free Library as the Holden Collection for public use. Holden became State Historian and was the secretary of the Library Trustees for some 25 years.

The library, however, bears the name of Henry Crandall (1821–1913), the wealthy businessman who bankrolled the library almost entirely in its first 25 years. Even today, the resting place for his fortune, the Crandall Trust, contributes to the library's budget. He also provided the original library space in a building he owned in the current City Park, opposite the Soldiers' Monument. For many years he was the honorary president of the Library Trustees, while other trustees (especially Sherman and Holden) saw to the oversight and daily operations.



Henry Crandall insisted that the library be a “Free Library,” one that would promote the “intellectual, moral and material welfare” of the community and beyond. From the beginning, he wanted it be free and open to all:

“If I give money for a library I want the books to be absolutely free to anyone who has interest enough in reading to call at the library for them, and I would not wish to be required to give any guarantee whatever. I would be willing to have the books go as far away as any person cares to come, even if it was as far as Quebec.”

Henry Crandall was a self-made man, coming from very humble beginnings. He saved his first thousand dollars by the age of 30, by working as a teamster hauling logs in the Adirondack woods. With this money he began a lumbering business on the Hudson River, moved to Glens Falls in 1850, and invested heavily in real estate to make a fortune. About 1880, Crandall retired from active business life and devoted his attention to public matters and philanthropy, including a Boys Savings Club, two parks, and a library.

The five-pointed star of our logo is the same star atop the monument in Crandall Park where Henry and his wife Betsy Crandall are buried. It was the logging mark used by Crandall in his lumbering business to identify the logs he floated down the Hudson to the mills here in Glens Falls.

The Board of Trustees at Crandall created the Folklife Center on July 23, 1993, as its own department within the Library, charged with the mission to preserve and present the cultural traditions of the upper Hudson valley and southern Adirondacks of upstate New York.

Crandall’s 5-pointed star reminds us of those who supported the need for free access to the world of ideas that public libraries embody. In this 25th year, we aspire to carry on the 125-year legacy of these early supporters of Crandall – broad discourse on a variety of topics, interest in the local but also the international, collaboration with other organizations, working with the next generations to carry on the work, and free access to anyone interested enough to participate. Through our gallery exhibitions, research room with its archives and special collections, and our many cultural programs, we invite our many publics to join us in our continued journey of discovery.

Todd DeGarmo, From the Editor column,
Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore,
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