

# FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

415-02914-306 Southbridge STU.A STU.11  
NRDIS 11/9/1977

**Town/City:** Sturbridge

**Place:** (*neighborhood or village*): Sturbridge Center

## Photograph



**Address:** 306 Main Street

**Historic Name:** Joshua Hyde Public Library

**Uses:** Present: Library

Original: Library

**Date of Construction:** 1896

**Source:** Holley and Wilken 1970 (Public Safety Plan Record)

**Style/Form:** Colonial Revival

**Architect/Builder:** Alfred L. Darrow/Hall and Miller

### Exterior Material:

Foundation: Stone

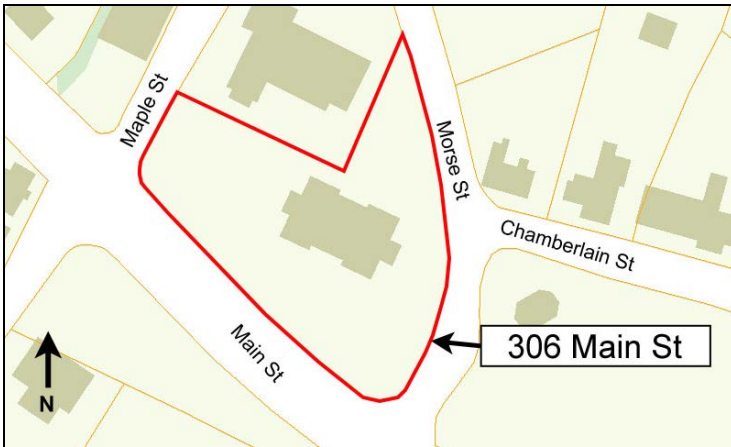
Wall/Trim: Brick /Granite Trim

Roof: Slate Shingle

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:** Sturbridge Soldiers Monument (STU.910)

**Major Alterations** (*with dates*): rear addition, 1988

## Locus Map



**Condition:** Good

**Moved:** no  yes  **Date:**

**Acreage:** 1.03 acres

**Setting:** The building is on an irregular-shaped lot bounded on the west by Maple Street, south by Main Street, east by Morse Street, and north by the Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale. The parcel slopes steeply towards the east, and the building is built into the slope of the hill, facing west toward Maple Street.

**Recorded by:** L. Kline, G. Pineo, E. Giacomarra; PAL

**Organization:** Sturbridge Historical Commission

**Date** (*month / year*): May 2018

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STURBRIDGE

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Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

*If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Joshua Hyde Public Library (1896, STU.11) is a west-facing, Colonial Revival-style, one-story, five-bay-by-three-bay, buff brick building with a stone foundation and a hip roof. A one-story hyphen connects the east elevation to a two-story addition built into the slope. The addition also has a stone foundation and a hip roof; the hyphen has a flat roof. The main block has an octagonal cupola surrounded by a square balustrade at the center of the roof ridge; each elevation of the cupola contains a round-arched opening filled with wood louvers beneath a bracketed cornice. The facade (west) elevation has a central projecting entrance bay with a pedimented gable roof that has a bracketed and dentiled cornice above a wide frieze and bracketed eaves. An oculus window surrounded by ornate detailing is centered in the gable peak. Two Doric columns and curving brick side walls support the gable pediment. The recessed entrance contains a six-panel wood door with a molded surround below a limestone sign reading "JOSHUA HYDE LIBRARY." The rear (east) elevation of the building has a two-story, projecting center bay with a pedimented gable roof, a dentiled cornice, and engaged pilasters at the north and south corners.

Fenestration in the main block and the first story of the addition consists of regularly spaced round-arched openings with stone sills and connecting limestone lintels, filled with six-over-one, double-hung wood sash and a fanlight. Fenestration in the hyphen and the lower level of the addition consists of rectangular openings with stone sills and lintels containing six-over-one, double-hung wood sash. A single round window is centered in each story and the gable peak of the rear projecting bay's east elevation.

The Sturbridge Soldiers Monument (1871, STU.910) is on the lawn southwest of the library building. The monument by an unknown sculptor is composed of a granite obelisk set on a square plinth with a stepped granite base. It is surrounded by a low retaining wall constructed of rough-dressed, rectangular granite slabs. The obelisk was inscribed with 27 names of soldiers and sailors who died in the American Civil War (1861–1865); in the early twenty-first century, two missing names were inscribed on the obelisk, which was then rededicated.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The Joshua Hyde Public Library (1896, STU.11) is in the center of Sturbridge, west of the Sturbridge Town Common. The area was settled ca. 1725 by residents of Medfield, and Sturbridge was incorporated as a town in 1738 (MHC 1984:3-4). The land that the library is built on was originally part of the Town Common. About 1850, the town leased the west portion of the Common to Elisha Southwick, who with Amos Holbrook built a two-story shoe factory into the hillside. Southwick went into business with E.F. Shaw, but Shaw left the business after a short time. Southwick hired Charles Allen as manager, Charles Fuller to work in the upper leather department, and Frank Cooper to work in the sole leather department. Bottoming of the shoes was done as a cottage industry, with various people performing the work in their homes. Southwick retired by 1870 and turned control of the factory over to his son-in-law A.C. Morse, who took on Hiram Carter as a partner. By 1896, the business had folded, and the factory building was no longer extant (Corey 1910:232–233; Beers 1870).

The first library in Sturbridge was created in 1804 as part of a social library movement that originated in the 1790s. It was a private organization, and only members were permitted to borrow books (Holley 1959:1). The second library in town was the Quinebaug Library Association, founded in 1850 by young men who desired moral and intellectual improvement. The group had weekly meetings frequently addressed by Reverend David Austin of the Congregational Church and staged debates between appointed teams. Association meetings were suspended during the Civil War. Library books were held in multiple locations, including the Haynes' Carriage Shop, 307 Main Street, STU.43, a shoe shop (no longer extant), and Charles Corey's store (Jared Lamb Building, 2–8 Chamberlain Avenue, STU.14). The association folded in 1873 and gave its collection to the town's newly created public library (Holley 1959:5–6).

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The first public library in Sturbridge was initially located in the Selectmen's Room at Town Hall and later in the Central School, 301 Main Street (STU.39). In 1874, Miss Emeline Hutchins of 274 Main Street served as librarian and the library had 1,550 volumes. By 1889, the collection had increased to 3,000 volumes (Morse 1879:362; Chase 1889:117).

George B. Hyde, a Boston teacher originally from Sturbridge, donated the money for the town to build a dedicated public library. Named for Hyde's father, Joshua Hyde, a Revolutionary War soldier buried in Sturbridge, the building was designed by Boston architect Alfred L. Darrow in 1896 and built by the Boston construction firm of Hall and Miller (Holley 1959:8; Holley and Wilkin 1970; Davis 1856:40; Burns 1984:15). By 1897, when the library officially opened, the collection contained nearly 4,000 volumes (Holley 1959:7). The building was expanded in 1988 and retains its original use as the town of Sturbridge's public library (Sturbridge Assessor 2018).

The Sturbridge Soldiers Monument (STU.910) on the library property predated the building. The monument was dedicated on Memorial Day 1871, with Captain David Wight delivering the dedication address. It cost \$1,400 and is inscribed with the names of 27 soldiers and sailors who died in the Civil War. Two names were initially missing from the monument for unknown reasons: W. L. Blood, who was killed at Antietam on Sept 17, 1862, and A. F. Crosby, who died at Winchester on Sept 19, 1864, but were added in the early twenty-first century (Briere n.d.).

*Alfred Lyman Darrow (1858–1940)*

Architect Alfred Darrow was born in Connecticut. In 1910, his office was at 8 Beacon Street in Boston and he lived in Cambridge with his wife, Ada, and his son, widowed mother, and sister (Find a Grave 2014; US Census 1910). Darrow was widowed by 1920, when he and his son boarded with a family on Forest Street in Cambridge (US Census 1920). Twenty buildings in MACRIS are attributed to Darrow, including the H. C. Birgurie Town Houses, 22–32 Peterborough Street, Boston (1903, BOS.7570–7574); the Roxbury First Baptist Church, 471 Warren Street, Boston (1897, BOS.11426); the Charles C. Hoyt House, 186 Tappan Street, Brookline (1906, BKL.3021); and the Palmer Second Congregational Church, 1080 Pleasant Street, Palmer (1909, PAL.331). Most of Darrow's attributed buildings are in the Colonial Revival style; he also designed a small number of Craftsman, Queen Anne, Shingle, and Victorian Gothic buildings.

The Joshua Hyde Public Library was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on November 9, 1977, as part of the Sturbridge Common Historic District.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

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## PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 2. Joshua Hyde Public Library and Sturbridge Soldiers Monument, looking northeast.

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Photo 3. Joshua Hyde Public Library, 306 Main Street, looking northwest.

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**HISTORIC IMAGES**



1892 depiction of the portion of the Common where the library now stands, showing the Morse shoe factory and the Sturbridge Soldiers Monument (Bailey 1892).



A. C. Morse shoe factory at the west end of the Sturbridge Town Common (ca. 1868) (Joshua Hyde Public Library archive).