



ALLENTOWN PUBLIC LIBRARY ALLENTOWN, NEW JERSEY

Preservation Plan, Structural Stabilization and Exterior Restoration Project

The Allentown Public Library was built originally as the local Baptist Church in the decade following the Civil War in the heart of the Allentown Historic District. A small community with an active and well-defined downtown, the historic district has architecture that embraces the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Except for a period immediately after a devastating fire in 1972, the building has always played an active part in community life. The building is noble, and yet unpretentious.



The Preservation Plan, Structural Stabilization and Exterior Restoration Project contribute to a series of renovation and rehabilitation campaigns that the local Library Board has undertaken as part of its long term commitment to the building. Previous campaigns stabilized the structure after the fire and restored it to use as a community library. These were all home grown efforts with little outside assistance. The time since the building's re-opening as a library has taught the Board of Directors that preservation efforts did not end with the building's return to public use. The Board hired Historic Building Architects to develop a Preservation Plan to address and guide future stewardship.



The Preservation Plan identified several areas of concern ranging from structural issues (heavy timber trusses requiring near-term reinforcement) to restoration goals that helped return the structure back to its late 19th/ early 20th century appearance. Most of the concerns identified were not caused by poor stewardship, but rather, by the age of the systems and materials and incremental changes over time. A recipient of New Jersey Historic Trust capital grant funds in 2000, the Structural Stabilization and Exterior Restoration Project was completed in 2004. In 2005 the Allentown Public Library received a New Jersey Historic Preservation Award.

