



## ETNA LIBRARY

This is a library with two equally important names. Officially, the library is called the ‘Hanover Town Library.’ The library’s history began in 1801, when a collection of books traveled from home-to-home in Etna. The community at that time was called ‘Mill Village,’ because of its location along the banks of the Mink Brook, whose falls powered multiple mills.



In 1905, Hanover decided to construct the Hanover Town Library and chose Etna as the location. Because of this location, and because of its identity as a cornerstone of the community, the library is better known today as the ‘Etna Library.’

The Etna Library is still that same library from 1905: it is a vibrant part of the community and espouses the ideal that when citizens come together and pool their resources, the result is something more than any one person could ever attain. The large table and wooden chairs that stand in the center of the library are original from 1905. Those who gathered in that first year of the library’s construction sat in the exact seats at the exact table where groups like the LEGO Builder’s Club or Book Group gather today.

The Etna Library is also a very different library than it was in 1905: it offers unique collections like video games and a seed library, offers patron computers and 24/7 wi-fi access, and it adds new books and other materials to its shelves each week, everything from bestsellers to obscure literary treasures.

### **Organization and Structure**

Many Hanover residents believe that the Etna Library is a branch of the Howe Library. While the Etna and Howe libraries do share an online catalog and offer reciprocal borrowing privileges, the two are otherwise entirely separate institutions with their own oversight, staff, budgets, and missions. The Etna Library is the town’s fully public library and is governed by three voter-elected trustees.

The Etna Library organizes an amazing group of volunteer couriers that link Hanover’s two public libraries. These couriers transport books back-and-forth between the two locations every single weekday, so that patrons can access both libraries’ collections in a way that’s most convenient for them. In 2023, the Etna Library sent over 2,000 Etna-owned books and other circulating items to the Howe Library via our couriers for patrons to pick up there.

The Etna Library accomplishes everything it does with only two staff members, both part-time (with the Library Director position to become full-time in FY25). The Etna Library is an incredibly lean organization that carefully plans how to use its limited resources in ways that best benefit the community.

### **Programming and Groups**

There was a 61% increase in the Etna Library’s program and group attendance from 2022 to 2023. Last year, the library hosted over thirty special programs for all ages and interests. For families, the library hosted events like an outdoor magic show, a painting with blueberry ink event, a bicycle parade, and numerous events about animals and nature. Many craft projects were offered, like Valentine’s cards, Spring Flowers constructed of paper, and Halloween spider-webs. Programs for adults included a talk by best-selling author Hank Phillipi Ryan; talks on topics such as gardening, hiking, and literature; and many lectures about local, national, and international history.

One program that the library co-hosted with the Hanover Historical Society told the fascinating story of a 19<sup>th</sup> century portrait of a prominent Hanover resident that was rescued from small-town thrift shop in NY and now hangs proudly in its new home at the library. Seven of the Etna Library's 2023 programs had over 40 attendees each, with two of these having over 70 people in attendance.

Ongoing groups and programs at the library include twice-weekly Story Times, a Knitting Club, book clubs, a LEGO Builder's Club, After School Craft Club, Universal Yums, and annual summer reading programs.

### **Patron Visits**

The Etna Library also saw a big year in terms of patrons visiting and making use of the building. There was a 53% increase in the number of patron visits from 2022 to 2023. It's believed that this large increase in patron visits was fueled by the library's new ongoing groups, a more vibrant and varied collection of circulating items, increased hours of operation, a concentrated effort of outreach and advertising, and a terrific schedule of special programs.

### **Collections and Circulation**

There was 20% increase from 2022 to 2023 in the number of items circulated from the Etna Library, with patrons borrowing everything from the newest bestselling adult fiction to children's graphic novels. The Etna Library circulates books, audiobooks, and periodicals, but also offer many unique collections, too. Video games, board games, the Toniebox screenless audio player for kids, and Activity Backpacks all share the shelves with more traditional items.



### **State-Wide Statistics**

Each year, the NH State Library in Concord gathers statistics from all of NH's 200-plus public libraries. Examining this data and comparing the Etna Library's small size to its large impact yields valuable insights. The State Library statistics are always a year behind, so the most recent state library data is for 2022, thus not taking into account the large increases in program attendance, patron visits, and circulation that the Etna Library saw in 2023.

Library size vs Number of patron visits: Of all NH public libraries, Etna is smaller than all but twenty of them. In library size, measured in area in square feet, the Etna Library is in the 9<sup>th</sup> percentile. Yet, the Etna library has more patron visits than many libraries larger (and sometimes much larger) than it. In total number of patron visits, the Etna Library is the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile of all NH public libraries.

Collection items vs Circulated items: The Etna Library's circulation statistics are also impressive given its small collection. This is reflected in the number of physical items in Etna's collection (15<sup>th</sup> percentile), versus the number of physical items circulated (39<sup>th</sup> percentile).

Program Attendance: The Etna Library has also long had very strong program attendance numbers when compared to other libraries throughout the state. In looking at total program attendance statistics in the most recent NH State Library, the Etna Library ranks in the 44<sup>th</sup> percentile among all NH public libraries.

### **Looking Ahead**

The Etna Library is defined by its rich history, its beautiful rural setting, its small and cozy feel, the personalized services it offers, and by its strong ties to the community. Looking ahead to FY25, the Etna Library hopes to continue to capitalize on these elements which make it unique by offering more outdoor events in its beautiful backyard (Hayes Farm Park and the Nan & Allen King Bird Sanctuary), more programs of even greater variety, and new ongoing activities for all ages.

The Etna Library is a proud cornerstone of the Etna community, but it is also here for all of Hanover. For those who haven't been inside the Etna Library – in years, or ever before – its staff warmly welcomes you. Stop by, say hello, and see everything the Etna Library has to offer!

## ETNA LIBRARY TRUSTEE REPORT

The day's visitors are often heading out of the library while we pull up to the oak table for monthly trustee meetings. Knitters might be wrapping up conversation and yarn. Fading pizza scents trail an after-school LEGO club. A toddler roams the stacks while her mother coaxes her patiently homeward.

This was a quieter year: no building project, no hiring a new director or navigating a pandemic. Yet, in a given month we saw a thousand books circulate from the library's own collection, roughly a thousand website visits, and close to as many patrons walk through the door.

This has been a time to welcome community: a year to cherish another summer reading raffle, bushels of apples and families pressing cider to chase down cinnamon donuts, and snowsuiting up to follow a wintry story walk. Jeff planted and nourished a captivating website that features details about upcoming events and delves into Etna Library's rich history. His photo essay of the first Stuffy Sleepover, with art direction from his wife Sara and their son Noah, was priceless. And we approved projects vital and unseen - a fire detection system and boosted Wi-Fi.

This year we strengthened a tremendous collaboration with the Etna Ladies Aid Society, who assisted with programming costs and donated funds for a plaque celebrating the library's status as a National Register of



Historic Places property. Trumbull Hall is Etna's nearby community room adjoining the village church up the road. A welcoming, versatile space, it can host large groups that couldn't otherwise squeeze into our jewel box library. This adjunct space has helped launch Etna's own little Chautauqua. And the momentum we feel isn't unlike the lyceum movement that enriched villages across antebellum America. The library has hosted UNH marine science docents and NH Humanities Council lecturers along with programs that draw on abundant local talent. History programs prevail and, with Etna forging its own historical society, the library will help to curate

and archive collections. As it is home to many of the region's oldest houses, it's particularly fitting that rural Hanover host historic programs and performances of old-time music.

And there is the boundless outdoors. Hayes Farm Park and King Bird Sanctuary have proved the best of neighbors. Future library programs can spill onto these town and Hanover Conservancy spaces and make use of vast woodland trails out our back door.

We like to think of Etna as a quiet outpost of sweet proportions. The original card catalog just came out of retirement to dispense our seed library - two hundred tiny packets circulated to gardeners last year. Micro pouches of spices featured in the library's spice-of-the-month offerings go home to kitchens. A mere postage stamp of a reading garden in back offers just enough room to read and relax. A miniature O-gauge train circles overhead in the timber peg rafters of the addition.

Maybe others have thought it, too, that Jeff is our own Mr. Rogers - ageless, timeless, enchanting to patrons of all ages. The trustees were impressed by Jeff's humble and capable nature when we hired him from a pool of great candidates in the fall of 2021 to replace a beloved librarian of twenty-plus years. Assistant librarian Sarah

Molesworth, two per diem subs, and an eager volunteer roster complete the library crew. The three library trustees are elected by town ballot (at times the *only* contested race) to a term of three years - typically re-upping unopposed to serve out a two-term limit.

The library has no traditional fundraising and yet warmly accepted contributions arrive, some in memory of someone who loved the library, others simply because a precious place wants protecting. In February, the Love-My-Library table offers patrons a chance to sponsor a new book for the collection. Our annual Thanksgiving pie sale is a donation doubled - first in the baking by volunteers and then in the selling.

Hanover's littlest town building hosts many activities for the youngest Hanoverians. The teens and "tweens" - long a missing link in the library's programming - are now happily joining a pizza-fueled Lego club, global snacking, and crafts. Outdoor movies will even be coming soon to a library near you! And plans are shaping for a small outdoor pavilion to connect with the beauty behind us and shelter readers and tiny story-timers. It all feels very positive. The smiles and possibilities are everywhere.

