

THE STORY BEHIND THE KILTON LIBRARY

LONGTIME LEBANON RESIDENTS remember James and Wilena Kilton, who ran the Red Cross Pharmacy in downtown West Lebanon. The pharmacy was an important community hub — it was the place friends and neighbors came to pick up prescriptions, exchange pleasantries, or enjoy a root beer or a milk shake at the soda fountain. Local sports teams crowded into the pharmacy's sit-down booths to order sandwiches and rehash the evening's game.

The Red Cross Pharmacy has long since vanished, a casualty of a commercial environment that favors chain discount stores over smaller, family-operated pharmacies. The building, located just across Main Street from the West Lebanon post office, is now a chiropractor's office. If you look hard, you can still see the faded letters of "Red Cross Pharmacy" on the awning.

James Kilton grew up in West Lebanon and was educated at Dartmouth. His wife, Wilena Kilton, was a physical-education teacher. They were strong believers in the importance of education, and the library in West Lebanon, a two-minute walk from the pharmacy, was one of their favorite havens.

After James and Wilena died a few months apart in 1998, the Lebanon Library Board of Trustees received astounding news: The couple had willed a gift of \$1.3 million to the West Lebanon Library. The gift was restricted and could only be used for capital improvements including renovation or construction of a new library in West Lebanon.

The board of trustees had been wrestling for some time with long-term challenges presented by the facility in West Lebanon. Constructed in 1909, it is gem of a building and has served generations of patrons well. But an inventory of necessary upgrades and improvements to the building proved daunting.

Even with careful culling of outdated volumes, there is insufficient space for books, and the stacks are too close together for easy browsing. With no elevator or wheelchair-accessible bathrooms, the building does not comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). The children's room in the basement is cramped, and meeting space, staff work areas, computer stations and outdoor parking spaces are inadequate or nonexistent. The building is sited on a very small lot with little room for expansion.

The results of a 2001 Community Needs Assessment survey provided the board with a good idea about what community members

The new library has the potential to be a cultural center for the city, an anchor to attract new business and revitalize the West Lebanon downtown.

wanted in their library. It should have a larger, quiet reading area and more shelving to expand the book, audio-visual, DVD and books-on-tape collection.

There should be ample space for programs and meetings and more computer stations with Internet access. In addition, the library should be within easy walking distance of schools and local neighborhoods, be on the Advance Transit route and provide adequate parking for