Howard Whittemore Memorial Library
Water Infiltration Investigation, Roof Repairs, and Rotunda Skylight Replacement
Naugatuck, Connecticut

Named in honor of the son of industrialist John Howard Whittemore, the Howard Whittemore Memorial Library was designed by renowned architectural firm McKim, Mead & White and built in 1894. As part of the Naugatuck Center Historic District, the building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is one of a number of historically significant structures in Naugatuck designed by leading architects of the day. The Neo-Classical Revival library is constructed of pink granite with terra cotta ornamentation and a clay tile roof. In 1965, a modern style addition of steel and precast concrete was constructed at the rear of the original structure.

The grand entrance through an ionic portico brings visitors into a vaulted rotunda with a domed stained glass skylight. During rainstorms, water entered at this skylight and damaged the ornate interior finishes, consisting of plaster on lathe with gold leaf ornamentation. Water stains spread along the west wall of the rotunda from ceiling to floor, and paint and wallpaper peeled from the walls. In addition, the area at the intersection between the addition and the original building had begun to leak so heavily during rainstorms that staff placed buckets in the reading room to collect the water.

To restore and preserve the historic building the library retained Hoffmann Architects to conduct an investigation into the sources of water infiltration. Through site visits during weather events, water infiltration testing, and analysis of building conditions, Hoffmann Architects determined the probable causes of observed leaks and presented their findings in a detailed survey report. Subsequently, the library retained Hoffmann Architects to provide contract documents, bidding assistance and construction administration services for the recommended repairs to roofing and drainage components.

Hoffmann Architects was then retained to design and oversee restoration of the historic rotunda skylight. Work included removal and abatement of asbestos containing materials, glazing replacement, restoration of ornamentation, replacement of copper flashings and surrounds, and re-setting of existing terra cotta tile roofing. The restoration and water infiltration remediation projects served not only to address active leaks, but to prevent future water intrusion from threatening this cornerstone of historic Naugatuck.