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Library Director Jan Dempsey shared news of the restoration of a sculpture, 'Orphans,' which was donated to the Wenham **Library** some time ago.

The sculpture depicting two children, a young girl and a baby, was located in the garden inside the Children's Room at the old Wenham **Library**.

Initially, it was placed downstairs near the elevator when the new **library** opened. Later, for safety reasons, it was moved upstairs near the elevator.

The sculpture was created by Raimondo Pereda (1840-1915), who was born and studied in Italy. He frequently sculpted images of children and women, many for cemetery sculptures.

He was noted for realism, without a significant contribution to advancing the genre of sculpture. A similar sculpture, 'The **Orphans**,' was exhibited at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, Pa.

Despite care for the sculpture, the two figures were missing toes and fingers, a spoon, an eyelid and both figures were stained.

Dempsey said she is still researching how the sculpture came to Wenham.

Former Wenham Librarian Doris Gallant had a few facts to contribute to the history of the Wenham's ownership of the sculpture.

"When Charles Rice and Ann Proctor Rice had The Mansion at Turner Hill in Ipswich built, on the grounds was included a statuary garden (white marble statues - not sure how many)," she wrote in an email. "When Turner Hill was sold to the Missionaries of Our Lady of LaSalette in 1943, their daughter, Hilda Rice Ayer, who had married Frederick Ayer and built up Ledyard Farm in Wenham, donated to the Town of Wenham and the **Library**, one of these statues. We were told that it was titled 'two sisters.'"

Gallant said that around 1974 or 1975, the Hamilton-Wenham Garden Club found a way to incorporate the statute into the Children's Room Garden.

"The statue had been elsewhere around Town Hall during the period of 1943 to 1974," she continued. "At the time of the construction, the statue had been in storage. When we moved the Wenham **Library** over to the new **library**, we felt that it was an important piece of town history."

Dempsey said the restoration was done by Allied Conservation in Hamilton.

They cleaned and repaired statue, which was returned to the **library** on May 28.

Tim Neill of Allied Conservation was happy to share the story of the restoration, and he and his partner, Sarah Blanding, provided before and after photographs of the sculpture.

Neill said the first phase was moving the sculpture from the **library** to the store.

It was too heavy - Neill estimated 300-500 pounds - to lift into a vehicle, so it was placed in a pushcart and wheeled from the **library** to Allied Conservation on Willow Street.

He and Blanding constructed a temporary ramp to wheel it onto the premises.

Once there, Blanding cleaned it with a variety of detergents and solvents.

Meanwhile, the research revealed a second version of the sculpture and the photographs of the Centennial Exhibition piece was helpful in making replacement pieces for the **library's** copy.

Neill is an oil painter by preference, but, while attending Mass Art, he also took many sculpture courses.

He sculpted copies of the missing pieces – the girl's eyelid and pinky, the baby's fingers and toes, the spoon and part of the bowl the girl is feeding them with.

Then, Neill made silicon molds to use the "lost wax technique."

He poured a plastic resin into the molds, toning the resin with marble dust and mica powder.

After attaching the molded pieces to the original sculpture, Neill then filled the seams and painted them with more marble dust and mica powder to match the sculpture's actual marble.

"I love the chemistry part, too," he said with a grin.

When the restoration was complete, the sculpture was wheeled back through the streets of Hamilton and Wenham to its home at the Hamilton-Wenham Public **Library**, back to its home on the second floor.

CITATION (MLA STYLE)

Sprague Frederiksen, Lucy R.. "LIBRARY 'Orphans' sculpture restored." *Hamilton Wenham Chronicle (MA)*, sec. MA News, 13 June 2013, p. 1. *NewsBank: America's News*, infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=NewsBank&docref=news/146E8DD3A047A430. Accessed 20 Sept. 2022.

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