

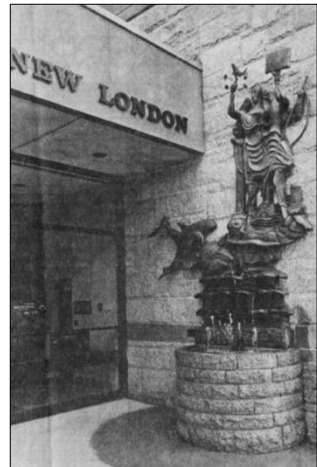
A fond memory about Bill's Library Sculpture

by Torrey Fenton

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Bill always loved New London. In his early days here, it was a much different city. The two thriving theaters, the battle to save the train station, the many events at the waterfront - all combined to capture the interests of the various communities that made up New London.

In 1979, Bill created a sculpture - a fountain - for the front of the New London Public Library that faces Huntington Street. The sculpture was planned as a gift of the Isser family in memory of the late Isser Gruskin, an attorney and prominent city resident. Isser's widow, Mildred Gruskin, and his brother, Attorney Samuel Gruskin, spoke at the dedication ceremony about the influence of libraries and on Isser as an immigrant boy. In those days, as now, the library faced financial stresses. There was no budget available to fund a plumber, so that chore fell to Bill. He enlisted the aid of David Fenton, a neighbor and good friend and a member of the physics department at Connecticut College, who understood plumbing and wiring.



The three of us worked one spring weekend to get the thing up and running. David and Bill railed around in the bowels of the library, threading pipes and wires in and around the sub-structure. As David's wife, I was the fetcher and passer of tools and anything else that might be needed. I remember that Bill's wife Patty made us delicious sandwiches and dessert bars and brought them down to us. Shortly after lunchtime that Saturday, we had a visit from Ruby Turner Morris. As we all know, Ruby was the first woman to serve as Mayor of New London, as well as professor of economics at Connecticut College. As we all also know, she was something of a character. She came down to monitor our progress, and brought us Screwdrivers of the liquid variety - just what we needed to improve our concentration on the mechanical matters we faced! That didn't deter any of the three of us from enjoying them.

Anyone who ever worked in/on an old building knows that everything that CAN go wrong usually does, and this project was no exception. After many hours of work, the fountain was installed and working beautifully. As time went on, it needed to be turned off for the winter and on again in the spring. Every time some part of the fountain failed, Bill was the person who had to deal with repairs, with occasional help from David.

The fountain remains there today, splashing and cooling passers-by on Huntington Street. It is just as splendid a creation now as when it was installed.