

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information.

New Submission Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Carnegie Libraries of New York City

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

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D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.

Signature of certifying official Title Date

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts

(If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)

In 1901 Andrew Carnegie offered New York City \$5.2 million to build branch libraries throughout the five boroughs. It was one of the signature achievements of Carnegie's philanthropic program, in which he sought to give away his vast fortune during his lifetime. At the time of Carnegie's grant, Greater New York City was still only a few years old (having consolidated in 1898), and its many independent libraries were also coalescing into the three systems that exist today. Some officials hoped the grant would encourage the libraries to unite into a single city-wide organization, but ultimately Carnegie's gift to New York City was apportioned between the three systems and administered as separate (if closely aligned) programs.

Andrew Carnegie and his Philanthropic Pursuits

Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) was born in Dunfermline, Scotland, the son of a handloom weaver, Will Carnegie, and his wife, Margaret. The family immigrated to the United States in 1848—in large part because the increasing mechanization in the textile industry made work scarce in the homeland—settling in Allegheny, PA, near Pittsburgh. Young Andrew started working at age 13 to help support his family. Carnegie quickly advanced in his professional career. By 1853 he had become personal telegrapher to Thomas Scott, the superintendent of the Pennsylvania Railroad's Western Division. Under Scott's tutelage, Carnegie made his first investment in railroads, eventually leading to his purchase of the Woodruff Sleeping Car Company, America's first railroad sleeping car.¹ The Civil War gave Carnegie more opportunities to advance in the railroad business. At the war's end, he had made his first of many fortunes. By the time he was 30 he had interests in railroads, steamships, and oil wells. He eventually decided to concentrate on his ironworks, building the Carnegie Steel Corporation, at one point the largest steel manufacturing company in the world. When he retired from active business in 1901 he was arguably the wealthiest person in the United States.

By the 1870s, relatively early in his career, while he was still accumulating his fortune, Carnegie began formulating a detailed philanthropic philosophy, which he codified in a pair of essays published in 1889. In the first, "The Gospel of Wealth," he outlined his belief that wealthy people should give away the majority of their fortune while they were still alive, preferably to cultural institutions that would uplift all of humanity. The second essay, "The Best Fields for Philanthropy," outlined seven areas that Carnegie deemed most worthy: universities; free public libraries; hospitals, medical colleges, laboratories, and other institutions connected with the alleviation of human suffering; public parks; a hall suitable for meetings and concerts; swimming baths; and churches.²

While Carnegie placed universities at the top of his list, he acknowledged that "it is reserved for very few to found universities, and, indeed, the use for many, or perhaps any, new universities does not exist."³ He believed that libraries were "the best gift which can be given to a community" since they were needed in every town, large or small. Carnegie also had a personal fondness for libraries. He credited much of his own success to the knowledge he gained reading books in the private library of Colonel James Anderson in Allegheny.⁴

¹ David Nasaw, *Andrew Carnegie* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006) 54-65.

² Summary from a poster published by the Carnegie Corporation in 1935.

³ "The Best Fields," 688.

⁴ Anderson opened his personal library to local working boys every Saturday night. Carnegie borrowed as many books as he could, reading everything in the colonel's library. As he noted, "it was when reveling in these treasures that I resolved, if ever wealth came to me, that it should be used to establish free libraries." "The Best Fields," 689.

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In his essays, Carnegie made clear his belief that private philanthropy should, in most cases, function primarily as a jump-start for government action. Discussing libraries, he noted that one should only be given “provided the community will accept and maintain it as a public institution, as much a part of the city property as its public schools, and, indeed, an adjunct for these.”⁵ He also cited two precedents for his library philanthropy, both of which involved considerable government involvement. He called Great Britain the “foremost in appreciating the value of free libraries for its people” and praised British legislation allowing its towns and cities to levy taxes to support local libraries, a practice that was still rare in the United States (New York State only passed such laws in 1886).⁶ Closer to home was Enoch Pratt, who donated \$1 million for Baltimore’s library system beginning in 1882. Pratt’s gift came with the stipulation that the city “pay 5 per cent per annum, amounting to fifty thousand dollars per year, which is to be devoted to the maintenance and development of the library and its branches.”⁷ Carnegie embraced many aspects of the British and Pratt models, especially the requirement that municipalities assume control of the libraries and contribute to their upkeep.⁸

At first Carnegie focused his library giving on locations important to him personally; he donated his very first library building to his hometown of Dunfermline, Scotland (gifted 1880, opened 1883).⁹ This was soon followed by libraries in Edinburgh (1886-90) and around Pittsburgh, including Braddock (1886-89), Allegheny (1886-90), Johnstown (1890-91), and Homestead (1896-98).¹⁰ Carnegie’s first multi-building bequest went to Pittsburgh itself in 1890. He offered \$1 million for a central library and neighborhood branches, with the typical stipulation that the gift was for construction costs and that maintenance was to be handled by the city. He further stipulated that, “All of these [branches] should be thoroughly fire-proof, monumental in character, and creditable to the city.”¹¹ This condition reinforces the fact that Carnegie’s philanthropic program was principally an architectural pursuit; he even wrote that “all that our cities require to begin with is a proper fire-proof building.”¹²

Until 1898, all but one of the Carnegie-funded libraries in America was located in Pennsylvania, most within the Pittsburgh metropolitan region.¹³ Many of these libraries were actually built as part of multi-purpose community centers—incorporating other services such as public baths and recreational facilities—and some were even given endowments for their continued maintenance (in spite of Carnegie’s stated distaste for such largess). Starting in 1898, however, it was becoming increasingly apparent that Carnegie was preparing to implement his philanthropic program as outlined in his two treatises. Requests for libraries throughout the country started pouring in.¹⁴ Brooklyn, for example, feted Carnegie at “Library Day” in 1897, presumably an

⁵ “The Best Fields,” 688-9.

⁶ Carnegie noted that many of the country’s free public libraries were “the gifts of rich men, whose funds have been used for the building, and in some cases for the books also, the communities being required to maintain and to develop the libraries; and to this feature I attribute most of their usefulness.” “The Best Fields,” 689.

⁷ “The Best Fields,” 689.

⁸ Carnegie doubled down on the municipal commitment, stipulating 10 percent to Pratt’s 5.

⁹ His gift of 5,000 pounds came with the condition that the library remain under municipal control to “reap the benefits conferred on such establishments by the Library act.” He had previously contributed a like amount for a swimming bath in Dumferline known as the “Carnegie Baths.” “A New-Yorker’s Gift,” *New York Times* (December 27, 1879), 8.

¹⁰ The Braddock library was the first Carnegie-funded library to open in America. The Allegheny was the first donated by Carnegie and the second to open.

¹¹ “The Carnegie Free Library,” *The Critic* 16 (March 1, 1890), 108.

¹² “The Best Fields,” 691.

¹³ The lone exception was Fairfield, Iowa (1892), often cited as the first library donated by Carnegie to a municipality to which he had no personal connection.

¹⁴ Bobinski, 25.

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appeal for a grant of its own. After this point most Carnegie-funded libraries were devoted solely to library use and were to be maintained exclusively by the local community.¹⁵

In 1901, Carnegie sold his steel holdings to J. P. Morgan for \$500 million and retired from active management of his remaining businesses. Now the wealthiest person in America, he made his gift to New York City just a day later, effectively announcing to the world that he would devote himself entirely to his philanthropic pursuits. Carnegie treated his philanthropy as he had his businesses. During his professional career Carnegie was known as an astute operator, creating the concept of cost accounting (wherein the costs of operating a business are recorded and analyzed to increase efficiency and optimize operations). As grant requests poured in, he hired James Bertram—who also served as Carnegie’s personal secretary from 1897-1914—to oversee day-to-day operations. Bertram soon formalized the application process, producing standardized questionnaires and, eventually, even a guide to library design.¹⁶ In 1911 Carnegie further formalized his philanthropic program by founding the Carnegie Corporation. Bertram was appointed the founding secretary (a position he retained until his death in 1934) and was on the executive committee.¹⁷

The Carnegie library building program slowly wound down in the 1910s. In 1915 the Carnegie Corporation hired Alvin S. Johnson to analyze the effectiveness of the program. After an extensive study, he concluded that a well-trained, professional library staff was likely more important to the successful functioning of a public library than its physical plant.¹⁸ The corporation made its last library building grant in 1917, although projects already in the pipeline continued through the 1920s.¹⁹ In 1925 the Carnegie Corporation began a new program to support training programs by the American Library Association and other professional organizations.²⁰

By the time he died in 1919, Carnegie had given away approximately \$350 million, comprising about 90 percent of his wealth. Libraries represented a good fraction of this amount. Worldwide, 2,509 libraries were completed, costing \$56 million; 1,679 were located in the US, costing \$40 million.²¹ The New York City library program, at \$5.2 million, accounted for about 13 percent of Carnegie’s spending on libraries in the US, about 9 percent of his spending worldwide on libraries, and 1.5 percent of his entire philanthropic undertaking.²²

¹⁵ Bobinski divides Carnegie’s library program into two periods: the “Retail” period (1886-96) and the “Wholesale” period (after 1898).

¹⁶ The guide, *Notes on Library Buildings*, was first given out in 1908. It contained minimum standards for all libraries receiving Carnegie funds and included six model plans designed for maximum efficiency.

¹⁷ Along with Carnegie and Bertram, the early leadership of the Carnegie Corporation included treasurer Robert A. Franks, a former financial secretary to Carnegie.

¹⁸ Van Slyck, 217.

¹⁹ In New York City, this included the Washington Irving (1923), Fordham (1923), Woodhaven (1924), and Hunt’s Point (1929) branches.

²⁰ Van Slyck, 217.

²¹ Bobinski, 3.

²² In comparison, Philadelphia received \$1.5 million for 25 libraries; Pittsburgh received about \$1.2 million for nine buildings; St. Louis \$1 million for seven. Of the states, New York also ranked at the top with \$6.45 million in Carnegie grants; the next highest, Pennsylvania, received \$4.62 million, below the total spend in New York City alone.

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History of New York's Public Library Systems

New York City has three separate public library systems, each responsible for a specific geographic territory. The New York Public Library oversees Manhattan, the Bronx, and Staten Island, while the Brooklyn and Queens Borough Public Libraries cover their eponymous boroughs. All three are structured as independent, non-profit corporations with their own administrations, staffs, and real estate holdings. Each has its own standing contract with the City of New York to provide public library services within its specified territory in exchange for public funding. The history of the founding of three systems, as well as the decision to keep them separate, is inextricably linked to Carnegie's grant to the city.

During much of the 19th century, libraries—like many essential services—were operated privately, without the benefit of public funding.²³ In fact, state laws often prevented municipalities from using tax revenue to pay for library services. This began to change toward the end of the century as many states passed legislation enabling towns and cities to levy taxes explicitly for public libraries. New York State was one of the earlier ones, passing its law in 1886.²⁴ Within a decade the number of publicly funded libraries (including several branch systems) had proliferated throughout the state, including in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the more densely settled parts of Queens. By 1900 New York City counted fourteen separate library organizations receiving municipal support.²⁵

This proliferation of independent public libraries came to a fairly abrupt end following the consolidation of Greater New York City in 1898.²⁶ Over the course of a few years, the new municipal government undertook the important, if sometimes messy, process of integrating its duplicative departments and services, including its libraries. The new mayor, Tammany Democrat Robert Van Wyck, and comptroller, Bird S. Coler, both favored a single public library system for the entire city (as did Andrew Carnegie).

Even before consolidation, Brooklyn and New York had each begun the process of merging their various independent branches into coherent library systems. Library proponents in both cities likely foresaw the impending pressure to amalgamate and wanted to stake claim to their own territory before consolidation became official. This led to the creation of the Brooklyn Public Library and the New York Public Library. Queens—which consisted of a number of separate towns and villages without a unifying municipal identity—did not begin merging its library systems until after consolidation, but it too soon established a strong borough-wide library system (initially known as the Queens Borough Library, later renamed the Queens Borough Public Library). By the time of the Carnegie gift in 1901, these three borough-wide systems had acquired many of the independent libraries within their respective territories. They still faced pressure from the new municipal government to unite as a single agency, however, and the question of whether they would eventually merge was only resolved during the process of negotiating the Carnegie grant.

History of the NYPL

The New York Public Library was founded in 1895 through the merger of three existing institutions: the Astor Library; the Lenox Library; and the Tilden Trust. The oldest of these was the Astor Library, which John J. Astor

²³ The Boston Public Library, established 1848, was a rare exception.

²⁴ According to the law, to qualify for public funds the library was required to own at least \$20,000 worth of real estate and have a collection of 10,000 volumes.

²⁵ "Central Library System," *New York Times* (September 27, 1900), 14. These fourteen organizations operated 27 libraries.

²⁶ The turn of the 20th century was in general a period of organizational consolidation, most notably seen in the formation of colossal trusts and corporations.

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began planning by 1838 and to which he bequeathed \$400,000 upon his death in 1848.²⁷ It officially opened the following year in 1849.²⁸ From the beginning it was intended as a scholarly reference library, with closed stacks and books for use only on the premises. Although it was free and nominally open to all members of the public over the age of 14, admission was closely guarded by library staff and the limited opening hours precluded many working people from ever visiting. Though sometimes criticized as elitist and exclusionary, the Astor Library was renowned for its comprehensive collection and remained Manhattan's premier reference library throughout the remainder of the 19th century.

The second, the Lenox Library, was incorporated in 1870 to exhibit the private collection of James Lenox.²⁹ Like the Astor Library, it was intended to be a scholarly reference library, but it was much more limited in scope. Comprising mostly rare books and manuscripts, it functioned in many ways more like a museum than a public library, and, in fact, at its public opening in 1877 only displayed art and sculpture.³⁰ Also like the Astor Library, admission was free and nominally open to the general public, although the entrance requirements were even stricter and regulated through an onerous mail-in ticketing process. As an early historian of the NYPL noted, "The Lenox library was established for the public exhibition and scholarly use of some of the most rare and precious of such monuments and memorials of the typographic art and the historic past" and therefore "should be regarded as supplementary to others more general and numerous."³¹

The last of the three institutions comprising the NYPL was established by Samuel J. Tilden, who left the bulk of his estate, about \$2.4 million, for the creation of a free public library and reading room upon his death in 1886.³² Unlike the Astor and Lenox Libraries, the Tilden Trust had no collection of its own, and there was considerable debate among the trustees about whether the money should be used to establish a new institution or fund an existing library. Conditions appeared to favor the latter. Both the Astor and Lenox Libraries, though well established and well respected, were struggling financially and in need of a sponsor. In 1892, the Tilden trustees, led by John Bigelow, proposed a merger with Lenox Library, "to be known by some fitting designation indicating the union thus formed."³³ Two years later, in 1894, the plan was expanded to include the Astor Library as well.³⁴ The three institutions officially merged in 1895, creating The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

²⁷ Astor, who had already decided to leave a large bequest for public purposes, was encouraged by Joseph Green Cogswell to direct the money towards a library. Lydenberg, 3.

²⁸ It occupied rented quarters in a Bond Street rowhouse until its new, purpose-built home was finished at 425 Lafayette Street (1849-53, Alexander Saeltzer; additions 1856-59, Giriffith Thomas and 1879-81, Thomas Stent). This building is listed on the State (1980) and National Registers (1970, 90NR00922) and has been designated a local landmark (1965).

²⁹ Lenox had begun his collection in the 1840s, and for a time he would lend his books through the Astor and other libraries.

³⁰ In many ways the Lenox Library was a predecessor to such private collections as the Morgan Library and the Frick Collection; the library building (1870-77, Richard Morris Hunt) was in fact located on Fifth Avenue between 70th and 71st Street, where the Frick now stands. According to Charles A. Cutter, "Every librarian knows that the Lenox Museum as it should have been called, was not intended to be a free circulating library for the poor of New York, nor even a library of reference for the literary man anxious to throw off a magazine article...in the quickest possible time." Quoted in Lenox Library records finding aid, New York Public Library, online: <http://archives.nypl.org/nypla/4856>, accessed June 30, 2017.

³¹ Lydenberg, 106.

³² Tilden's estate was estimated at about \$5 million. His will also established free libraries in Yonkers and New Lebanon, NY. Lydenberg, 132.

³³ The trust briefly flirted with establishing a library in conjunction with both Columbia College and New York University. It also noted that "several of the smaller libraries of New York can probably be consolidated...under the direction of the Tilden Trust...as branches." Lydenberg, 142-48.

³⁴ Lydenberg, 150 and 304-11.

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From the outset, the primary mission of the NYPL was to build a central reference library—building on the strengths of the Astor and Lenox collections—rather than a system of neighborhood branches. As Bigelow noted, “New York already has as many small incomplete, and struggling libraries as are needed... What the city now wants is a library that possesses sufficient vital force to become, reasonably soon, a repair for students from all parts of the world.”³⁵ In 1902 the cornerstone of the library’s main branch was laid on the former Croton Reservoir site at Fifth Avenue between 40th and 42nd Street, and in 1911 the building (designed by Carrere & Hastings, who were also responsible for designing many of the Carnegie branches) officially opened to the public.³⁶

While the official name of the New York Public Library still honors the Astor, Lenox, and Tilden bequests, the NYPL’s branch system (and therefore the Carnegie program in Manhattan, the Bronx, and Staten Island) traces its origins not to these titans of industry but rather to a group of charitable women affiliated with Grace Church.³⁷ In 1878 several sewing instructors at the church decided to collect a few good books to lend to their pupils.³⁸ The program was so popular that in 1880 the women officially incorporated their organization as the New York Free Circulating Library. That same year they opened their first dedicated home on Bond Street. In 1883 they moved to a newly renovated space on the same street, and following reincorporation in 1884 they began opening additional branches throughout Manhattan.

The Free Circulating Library was focused on serving a very different population than Manhattan’s elite reference collections. An internal memo in 1881 noted “The libraries should, we think, be located in the centres of thickly settled and poorest communities... the works in each library being selected with a view to the wants of those living in each locality, more German books in the German districts, etc., etc.”³⁹ Notably, the Free Circulating Library also catered to children, who were barred outright from the Astor Library.

In its early years the organization was funded through private contributions. Andrew Carnegie was one of the earliest supporters—he initially gave \$1,000 but eventually contributed an additional \$4,000, earning him official status as a library founder. In 1887 the Free Circulating Library became one of the first in New York City to receive public funding under the enabling legislation in 1886.

During the turn-of-the-century consolidation fever, the Free Circulating Library was also one of the first to consider a merger with the NYPL. Its board approved the move in 1900, and in 1901 it officially became the Circulation Department (later renamed the Branch Library System) of the New York Public Library. At the time of consolidation, the Free Circulating Library had 11 branches, as well as a traveling facility. Of these branches, five were located in new or newly renovated buildings well adapted to library use.⁴⁰ The other six were housed

³⁵ *Scribners Magazine* (September 1892), quoted in Lydenberg, 145.

³⁶ The basic plan of the building was formulated by the NYPL’s first director, John S. Billings (who would play a pivotal role in securing New York City’s Carnegie grant), in consultation with architect Ernest Flagg. It is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places (1980, 90NR00874) and has been designated a local landmark (1967) and interior landmark (1974).

³⁷ The central role women played in the new organization was underlined in an early history of the NYPL: “One of the most noteworthy facts is the part taken in the history of the [Free Circulating] Library by women. The first president, the first secretary, the first chairman of the committee on ways and means, the first chairman of the building committee, and the first Librarian were women. Of the forty trustees that served from 1880 to 1901 nineteen were women. The working staff was almost entirely feminine.” Lydenberg, 227.

³⁸ They noted that many of their pupils were avid readers but didn’t have access to what they considered appropriate reading material.

³⁹ Lydenberg, 208.

⁴⁰ The system’s headquarters moved to renovated quarters at 49 Bond Street in 1883 (remaining in use until 1918). Four were in purpose-built library buildings, two of which remain in use: the Ottendorfer Branch, 133 Second Avenue (1884, still in use); the George Bruce Branch, 226 West 42nd Street (1888, in use until 1913, building since demolished); the Jackson Square Branch, 251

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in remodeled quarters, usually rented, that were soon deemed inadequate; all six would eventually move to buildings funded by the Carnegie grant.⁴¹

Within a few years most of the remaining independent circulating libraries in Manhattan had also merged into the NYPL. Though none individually matched the size or importance of the Free Circulating Library system, together these organizations account for at least nine of the 26 Carnegie libraries in Manhattan. These include the Harlem Library (one of Manhattan's earliest libraries, founded 1820 and incorporated 1825); the Washington Heights Free Library (1868); the University Settlement Library (founded 1887, merged 1903, became the Rivington Street Branch); Webster Free Library (conceived 1892, opened 1894, merged 1903); and the St. Agnes Free Library (1893, merged 1901). The Aguilar Free Library—founded in 1886 to serve Jewish immigrants, particularly on the Lower East Side—comprised four locations, all of which would eventually occupy Carnegie-funded buildings.⁴²

The Bronx—portions of which were annexed to the City of New York in 1874—was most closely aligned with Manhattan and therefore naturally came under the purview of the NYPL. A few private libraries operated in the area during the late 19th century—notably the collection of William E. Dodge in Riverdale (opened 1872, incorporated as the Riverdale Library Association in 1883, later merged into the NYPL as the Riverdale Branch) and the Huntington Free Library and Reading Room in Westchester Square (opened 1891, incorporated 1892).⁴³ Towards the turn of the century a few independent public libraries were established, all of which would eventually be merged into the NYPL and occupy Carnegie-funded buildings. These included the Kingsbridge Free Library (established 1894), the High Bridge Free Library (1901), and the Bronx Free Library (1901, merged into NYPL 1905 as the Tremont Branch).

Staten Island, the least populous of the five boroughs, naturally had the least developed library system. A few subscription and reference libraries operated on the island during the 19th century, often associated with institutions such as the Franklin Society (library established 1833-34), the State Island Institute of Arts and Sciences (library 1881), and the Staten Island Academy (library 1886).⁴⁴ There were also a handful of reading rooms—in many ways the precursors of the branch system—including J. C. Thompson's Reading Room on Bay Street (1859), a facility in New Brighton (1860), and the Young People's Literary Association Rooms in Tompkinsville. The Tottenville Library Association, founded in 1899 just after the consolidation of Greater New York, was the "First incorporated public library in the Borough of Richmond" and was officially chartered by the New York State Board of Regents.⁴⁵ Staten Island came under the purview of the NYPL in 1901. Tottenville was officially merged into the system in 1902-03, and in 1904 it moved into the first of four Carnegie-funded buildings in the borough.

West 13th Street (1888, in use until 1967, building extant in the Greenwich Village Historic District); and the Bloomingdale Branch, 206 West 106th Street (1898, still in use).

⁴¹ These six were the Harlem Branch (initially opened by the Free Circulating Library in 1892); the Muhlenberg Branch (1893); the Riverside Branch (1897); the Yorkville Branch (1897); the Thirty-Forth Street Branch, later renamed the St. Gabriel's Park Branch (1898); and the Catham Square Branch (1899).

⁴² These are the Seward Park Branch (originally the East Broadway Branch); the 58th Street Branch (originally the Lexington Avenue Branch); the Tompkins Square Branch (originally the Fifth Street Branch); and the Aguilar Branch (originally the 110th Street Branch).

⁴³ The Huntington Free Library and Reading Room occupied and expanded upon the Van Schaick Reading Room, a private library built 1882-83 to designs by Frederick Clarke Withers but never opened.

⁴⁴ New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *New York Public Library, Port Richmond Branch Designation Report* (New York: City of New York, 1998), 2.

⁴⁵ Lydenberg, 283.

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History of the BPL

During the course of the 19th century Brooklyn transformed from a rural hamlet into an incorporated village in 1816, a full-fledged city in 1834, and into the fourth largest metropolis in the United States before it was finally subsumed into Greater New York in 1898.⁴⁶ Its rapid urbanization was closely mirrored by the development of a series of libraries and related cultural organizations—oftentimes overlapping and interrelated—that evolved into some of the borough’s most enduring institutions. The present-day Brooklyn Museum, for example, traces its origins to the Brooklyn Apprentices’ Library Association, which was conceived in 1823 and incorporated in 1824.⁴⁷ The Apprentices’ Library eventually merged with the Brooklyn Lyceum (incorporated 1833), forming the Brooklyn Institute in 1843.⁴⁸ The Long Island Historical Society (now the Brooklyn Historical Society, established 1863) assumed some of the collection of the Brooklyn City Library, founded in 1839 as a subscription circulating library operating out of the Lyceum building. The Pratt Institute library, often cited as the first public library in Brooklyn, was established by Charles Pratt as part of his private school in 1887; he soon opened a second location, known as the Astral Branch, which would eventually be merged into the BPL system as the Greenpoint Branch and occupy a Carnegie-funded building.

Brooklyn's premier 19th century reference library was started only a few years after its Manhattan counterpart (the Astor Library). The Brooklyn Athenaeum and Reading Room was incorporated in 1852 and opened its own building on Atlantic Avenue and Clinton Street, at the southern edge of what is now Brooklyn Heights, in 1853. Soon facing declining usage, members of the Athenaeum established a new organization, the Brooklyn Mercantile Library Association of the City of Brooklyn, to oversee the collection in 1858.⁴⁹ It proved to be a resounding success; in 1868 it moved to a lavish new library building on Montague (which remained Brooklyn’s de facto central library until the completion of the Central Building on Grand Army Plaza in 1941), and in 1878 it changed its name to the Brooklyn Library.⁵⁰

The Brooklyn Public Library itself dates to the 1890s, making it nearly contemporaneous with the NYPL. In 1892 New York State—at the instigation of Brooklyn Mayor David A. Boody—passed enabling legislation authorizing the creation of a municipally funded library in Brooklyn.⁵¹ When enthusiasm for the project appeared to wane, an advocacy group called the Brooklyn Public Library Association was founded in January 1896 “for the purpose of creating an interest among the people of Brooklyn to establish a free public library.”⁵² Like the New York Free Circulating Library in Manhattan, the BPL Association’s membership consisted mainly of women, several of whom would eventually hold important positions in the library administration. The group solicited private subscriptions to help fund the new library, although its founders hoped “that the city will

⁴⁶ Brooklyn continued to expand with the annexation of Bushwick (including Williamsburg) in 1855; Flatbush, Gravesend, and New Utrecht in 1894, and Flatlands in 1896.

⁴⁷ In 1825 General Lafayette, the Revolutionary War hero, laid the cornerstone for the association’s new building at Cranberry and Henry Street in Brooklyn (completed 1826). The building was later acquired in 1838 by the City of Brooklyn (recently incorporated in 1834) as temporary quarters before Brooklyn City Hall, now Brooklyn Borough Hall, was finished in 1848.

⁴⁸ The lyceum’s building, located at Washington and Concord streets near present-day Cadman Plaza in Downtown Brooklyn, was begun in 1835. Focusing on its museum collections, the institute’s library was transferred to the Union of Christian Work in 1892.

⁴⁹ The founders of the new organization believed that, “if the library could be turned over to the control and management of young men, they would increase its growth and make it more useful.” “Historical Sketch of the Brooklyn Library,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (29 Mar. 1884), 2.

⁵⁰ The Montague Street building, designed by Peter B. Wright, was located in what was then the cultural heart of the independent city of Brooklyn. On the same block stood the Brooklyn Academy of Music (1861, Leopold Eidlitz) and the Brooklyn Art Association (1869-72, J. C. Cady), both demolished. The Packer Collegiate Institute for Girls (1853-56, Minard Lafever) and the Long Island Historical Society (1878-79, George B. Post) were also located nearby, both are extant within the Brooklyn Heights Historic District.

⁵¹ “Hungry for it: a Discussion of the Public Library Project,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (March 1, 1892), 6.

⁵² Quoted in “A Free Library,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (January 3, 1896), 9.

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be induced to take the subject up and co-operate with the association.” The association also was initially unsure “Whether it shall be a circulating or a reference library, location, etc. are matter for further consideration.”⁵³

The association’s efforts were soon rewarded. The formal creation of the BPL was approved by the Common Council in November 1896 and signed into law by Mayor Wurster that December.⁵⁴ A few weeks later, the City of Brooklyn declared January 14, 1897, as Library Day. A series of lectures and public forums culminated in a reception honoring Andrew Carnegie, who gave a lengthy keynote speech. It was hoped the magnate would commit to funding the new library.⁵⁵ Instead Carnegie ironically proclaimed that he was “almost on the point of envying” the person who would fund the Brooklyn Public Library and hoped that “some citizen of Brooklyn will seize this opportunity, which cannot long remain open, to provide for this city the necessary library and branches.”⁵⁶

Library Day also included the announcement of the new Board of Directors for the BPL.⁵⁷ Former mayor Boody was elected its first president and remained in that position until 1930, through the entire Carnegie program. The new leadership soon settled the question of what form the library would take, electing to establish a system of branch libraries instead of a central reference collection. On December 20, 1897—just weeks before the official advent of Greater New York—the BPL opened its first branch in borrowed quarters in Public School 3 on Bedford Avenue. Over the next several years additional branches were brought into the system, primarily through the acquisition of eleven independent libraries, several of which would eventually occupy Carnegie-funded buildings.⁵⁸ These included: Albany Heights (merged into the BPL system 1898); Flatbush (merged 1899); Astral, Bay Ridge, Fort Hamilton, Marcy, New Utrecht, and Schermerhorn (all merged 1901); Ridgewood (merged 1902, later known as the Washington Irving Branch); and Brownsville (merged 1905). The most notable merger was with the Brooklyn Library, which officially joined the BPL on July 1, 1903. Its special collections and endowment were merged into the BPL system, and its ornate building became the Montague Branch, the borough’s de facto reference library until the opening of the Central Library on Grand Army Plaza in 1941.

By 1901, the year Carnegie made his grant to New York City, Brooklyn had 16 branch libraries, most of them operating within the BPL system. In 1902 the Brooklyn Public Library was reorganized as a private corporation (much like the NYPL), in order to administer the Carnegie grant, and on June 5, 1903, the BPL and New York City ratified the contract under which the public libraries in Brooklyn still operate.⁵⁹

History of the QPL

Queens County remained a collection of separate towns and villages until it was consolidated into Greater New York in 1898. Its libraries were therefore fairly small and decentralized. By most accounts the earliest library in

⁵³ Quoted in “A Free Library,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (January 3, 1896), 9.

⁵⁴ “Public Library Resolution,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (December 8, 1896), 14.

⁵⁵ As the local press noted, “the movement to establish a public library in Brooklyn has attained a considerable momentum. It is to be feared, however, that the obstacle which will eventually check, if only for a time, this healthy progress, will be...lack of money...One simple way in which all of us can help is by attending the citizens’ reception to that prince of library givers, Mr. Andrew Carnegie.” *Brooklyn Life* (January 9, 1897), 6.

⁵⁶ Carnegie’s full keynote is transcribed in “Carnegie at the Academy,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (January 15, 1897), 9.

⁵⁷ The board initially consisted of 13 members, which was soon increased to 21 primarily to include the women members of the BPL Association.

⁵⁸ Freeman, 442.

⁵⁹ Though a private corporation, the Board of Trustees included as *ex officio* members the mayor, comptroller, and borough president. Library staff was also part of the city’s civil service system.

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Queens was established in Flushing in 1858 as a private subscription library. It was incorporated in 1869 and became a free circulating library in 1884.

Following the 1886 passage of enabling legislation, free public libraries proliferated throughout Queens in the 1890s. Hollis, Ozone Park, and Queens Village all established new libraries in 1896, while Richmond Hill started its library in 1899.⁶⁰ The Long Island City Public Library was established in 1896 from the private collection of William Nelson.⁶¹ The following year, in 1897, the Steinway Free Library—open to employees of the vast Steinway & Sons piano factory—was merged into the new public library as a separate branch.⁶² A third branch in Astoria was opened in 1898, making the Long Island City Public Library the first multi-branch library system in Queens County.

In 1899 the Long Island City Public Library was renamed the Queens Borough Library. This was a direct response to the formation of Greater New York and the desire of the new municipal government to consolidate its services:

The Queens Borough Library was the outgrowth of the consolidation of part of the Territory of the County of Queens into the Borough of Queens, as part of The City of New York, and the consequent control of appropriation by The City of New York. It was found that the City preferred to deal with one library board, in making appropriations under the library law, rather than with several. It seemed probable, at the same time, that greater economy and a more effective administration of the several libraries might be obtained if they could be united under one management.⁶³

Plans for merging the other independent free libraries in Queens began that same year (1899), and in 1901 the Hollis, Ozone Park, Queens Village, and Richmond Hill libraries were finally merged into the Queens Borough Library; they were soon joined by the Flushing (1902) and Poppenhusen (1903) libraries as well. Four of these would soon receive Carnegie-funded buildings.⁶⁴ By 1906 two additional branches had been opened in Carnegie buildings and three others in rented quarters.⁶⁵

On April 17, 1907 the Queens Borough Library was reorganized as an independent corporation—like the NYPL and the BPL—and renamed the Queens Borough Public Library.⁶⁶ On October 18, 1907 the new corporation entered into a contract with New York City to provide all public library services in Queens, the arrangement still in effect today.

⁶⁰ For a full discussion of the origins of these libraries, see *Report of the Queens Borough Public Library*, 10.

⁶¹ Nelson's collection in turn was assembled from three earlier private subscription libraries.

⁶² Half of the Steinway collection was in German, reflecting the immigrant origins of many of the piano factory workers.

⁶³ *Report of the Queens Borough Public Library*, 11.

⁶⁴ These were the Astoria, Flushing, Poppenhusen, and Richmond Hill branches.

⁶⁵ The new Carnegie Branches were in Elmhurst and Far Rockaway.

⁶⁶ Like the BPL, the Queens Borough Public Library had more direct city oversight than the NYPL. Its Board of Directors included several *ex officio* members from city administration, and its staff was part of the city's civil service system. As one account noted, under this arrangement the QPL was "left with all the friendly offices of the city at our service and all of the paralyzing restrictions removed." Jessie F. Hume, "The Queens Borough Public Library: A Sketch of its Development," *Library Journal* 34 (May 1909), 214.

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Carnegie's Grant to New York City

Carnegie officially announced his \$5.2 million offer to New York City on March 12, 1901 in a letter to John S. Billings, founding director of the NYPL.⁶⁷ The two men already had a close working relationship and had met several times to discuss Carnegie's potential gift. Billings later noted that, "I know Mr. Carnegie personally, and he had consulted me about various gifts which he intended to make to different libraries all over the United States. I think from the time that the donation was made for the Carnegie Laboratory he has spoken to me about his gifts."⁶⁸ The library director did not, however, claim credit for first proposing the gift, and in fact Carnegie had spoken to several others about the subject, including Arthur Bostwick (another NYPL official) and Mrs. Cross, trustee for the New York Free Circulating Library.⁶⁹ Regardless of who initiated the plan, it was clear that Carnegie preferred to deal directly with Billings and the NYPL rather than with city officials or other library organizations.

This letter from Carnegie established the basic criteria for the gift:

Sixty-five branches strike one at first as a large order, but as other cities have found one necessary for every sixty or seventy thousand of population the number is not excessive. You estimate the average cost of these libraries at, say \$80,000 each, being \$5,200,000 for all. If New York will furnish sites for these Branches for the special benefit of the masses of the people, as it has done for the Central Library, and also agree in satisfactory form to provide for their maintenance as built, I should esteem it a rare privilege to be permitted to furnish the money as needed for the buildings, say \$5,200,000. Sixty-five libraries at one stroke probably breaks the record, but this is the day of big operations, and New York is soon to be the biggest of cities.⁷⁰

The final amount, \$5.2 million, was a direct result of Carnegie's conferences with Billings. The director's primary interest was understandably the NYPL and its territory, which then encompassed Manhattan and the Bronx. He estimated it would require 40 libraries to establish a proper branch system in those two boroughs, with a library about every quarter mile in the densest areas. He also thought it would take between \$75,000 and \$125,000 to complete each branch (including the purchase of the site). "With regard to the other Boroughs of Greater New York," Billings wrote, "I have made no special plans or estimates, but have said that about 25 libraries would be required for them."⁷¹ Carnegie accepted these estimates and based his gift on a planned total of 65 libraries at an average cost of \$80,000.

Carnegie's letter also placed a few conditions on his gift; this was typical of most of his library donations. Namely it stipulated that the city would supply the sites and fund the branches' continuing maintenance and operations. Though not explicitly spelled out, it was assumed that this would amount to 10 percent of the donation (\$520,000) yearly.

Though Carnegie's offer was addressed to Billings and the NYPL, its scope encompassed all of Greater New York and to many observers it was unclear how the grant would be dispensed across the five boroughs. The

⁶⁷ Carnegie wrote his letter the day before departing to Scotland for the summer, perhaps intentionally distancing himself from much of the political wrangling that would ensue.

⁶⁸ "City Will Accept Mr. Carnegie's Libraries," *New York Times* (March 17, 1901), 2. The Carnegie Laboratory referred to in this quote may be the building that once stood at 338 East 26th Street, completed 1885 as part of Bellevue Hospital.

⁶⁹ Dain, 210-11, cited in Dierickx, 21.

⁷⁰ The letter is reproduced in full in Dierickx, 20.

⁷¹ Quoted in Lydenberg, 409.

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NYPL trustees initially demurred, claiming, “The methods and agencies of administering branches in Boroughs other than Manhattan and the Bronx, may well be left to be settled hereafter.”⁷² Billings, writing on his own behalf, was less equivocal: “We may fairly infer that Mr. Carnegie’s idea is that the whole system should be under one management, that of the Trustees of the New York Public Library.”⁷³

His colleague, George L. Rives, founding secretary of the NYPL, disagreed on practical grounds, noting that administering the grant “will involve very great additional labor and responsibility.” He was particularly concerned that “it would be very difficult for them [The NYPL] to manage libraries in Brooklyn or Queens, and, as there are already excellent library organizations in those boroughs, I should think it would prove better to arrange to have them administer any branch libraries that may be established there.”⁷⁴ Mayor Van Wyck echoed these sentiments, stating, “Regarding Brooklyn I felt the Brooklyn Public Library should have charge, while in Queens I believe the work should be put in the hands of the Queens Public Library.”⁷⁵

Officials with the Brooklyn Public Library naturally concurred with Rives and Van Wyck. Henry Sanger Snow, chair of the BPL Administration Committee, stated that, “I am of the opinion that such part of Mr. Carnegie’s fund as should be designated for the establishment and development of libraries in Brooklyn would be utilized more wisely and efficiently, and more in the interest of this borough, by a Brooklyn board than by a Manhattan board.”⁷⁶ David A. Boody, BPL president, concurred and added that the grant “should be distributed among the boroughs in proportion to population” (which Billings’s earlier estimates were in fact based on).

While the debate on how to administer the gift was still raging, a more pressing matter had to be addressed: whether New York City could legally accept the Carnegie grant.⁷⁷ Hoping to avoid future litigation, the city appealed to the state legislature for enabling legislation. The bill, officially known as the Seymour Library Enabling Act, had the full support of Governor Benjamin B. Odell and sailed through the process, being enacted April 27, 1901.

It appears that by that July the debate over consolidation had been settled against Billings’s wishes. Carnegie’s grant to New York City would thenceforth be administered by three separate library systems: NYPL being responsible for its existing territory in Manhattan and the Bronx, plus Staten Island; the BPL overseeing Brooklyn; and the QPL managing Queens. The grant itself was divided very nearly as Billings envisioned (which in the end happened to be very similar to the population-based method favored by Boody of the BPL). The NYPL would receive \$3.36 million for 42 libraries (amounting to \$1.59 per capita according to the 1900 census), Brooklyn was awarded \$1.6 million for 20 libraries (\$1.37 per capita, the lowest of the three systems), and Queens was given \$240,000 for three libraries (\$1.57 per capita).⁷⁸

There was one point on which officials from all three systems were in agreement: that administration of the grant should rest directly with the libraries, not with the city. As Billings noted, “If Mr. Carnegie had intended that the city officials would have direct charge of the donation, he would have written the letter to Mayor Van

⁷² Lydenberg, 408-9

⁷³ He conceded, however, that Carnegie hadn’t made that an explicit condition of his offer. “Mr. Carnegie Offers \$5,200,000 to New York,” *New York Times* (March 16, 1901), 1-2.

⁷⁴ “Mr. Carnegie Offers \$5,200,000 to New York,” *New York Times* (March 16, 1901), 1-2.

⁷⁵ “City Will Accept Mr. Carnegie’s Gift,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (March 16, 1901), 1.

⁷⁶ “City Will Accept Mr. Carnegie’s Libraries,” *New York Times* (March 17, 1901), 2.

⁷⁷ More specifically, the question was whether the city could legally purchase sites for library purposes as stipulated in Carnegie’s offer.

⁷⁸ While the final number of libraries differed based on construction cost and local interests, the final grant totals did not change substantially. The average Carnegie grant, country-wide, was about \$2 per person.

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Wyck.”⁷⁹ In the end, the libraries were given complete oversight over the building process, from selecting architects and contractors to making final payments. They also had control over site selection, although the city, which provided acquisition costs, retained veto power. This arrangement alleviated fears that the city’s Tammany Hall Democrats, led by Mayor Van Wyck, would turn the Carnegie program into a political patronage scheme.⁸⁰ Overall the Carnegie program in New York City remained notably untainted by scandal at a time when political patronage was rampant.⁸¹ One newspaper gushed that, “by the terms of the contract, the city has nothing whatever to with the expenditure, either of the city’s money or of Mr. Carnegie’s money. ‘Politics’ is not allowed to enter, to the extent of the appointment of a single janitor.”⁸²

Billings initially estimated that the entire Carnegie library program in New York City would take only five years to complete. Site selection and acquisition proved to be particularly fraught, however, and, as it turned out, the program would stretch on for nearly three decades until the final Carnegie-funded building was opened in Hunt’s Point on July 1, 1929.⁸³

System	Borough	Pop. in 1900	Grant	Grant/ Person	Libraries	Pop./ Library	Grant/ Library
NYPL	MN, BX, SI	2,117,621	\$3.36 million	\$1.59	39	54,298	\$86,154
	<i>Manhattan</i>	1,850,093			26	71,157	
	<i>Bronx</i>	200,507			9	22,279	
	<i>Staten Island</i>	67,021			4	16,755	
BPL	Brooklyn	1,166,582	\$1.60 million	\$1.37	21	55,552	\$76,190
QPL	Queens	152,999	\$0.24 million	\$1.57	7	21,857	\$34,286
All	All	3,437,202	\$5.20 million	\$1.51	67	51,302	\$77,612

The NYPL Carnegie Program

The NYPL was the first of the three systems to formalize its agreement with Carnegie, signing a contract on July 17, 1901. This document reiterated Carnegie’s previous stipulations—that the city provide sites for the libraries and contribute yearly funding not less than 10 percent of the gift—and added a few new ones, notably that the libraries had to be open from 9am to 9pm daily except for Sunday—a notable increase in operating hours. The contract was executed between the City of New York as party of the first part and the NYPL as party of the second part, acting as Carnegie’s agent.⁸⁴ This invested the NYPL Board of Trustees with full power to locate and build all Carnegie-funded libraries within its territory.

Under the terms of the agreement the NYPL received \$3.36 million for up to 42 libraries. In 1902, a supplemental agreement was signed increasing that number to 50, since it was believed that, “in view of the sparsely settled condition of certain parts of the said Borough of Manhattan, The Bronx, and Richmond, it would be of great benefit to the public that some of the free branch libraries to be erected in those Boroughs should be small buildings costing considerably less than \$80,000 each.”⁸⁵ In the end, however, only 39 Carnegie

⁷⁹ “City Will Accept Mr. Carnegie’s Libraries,” *New York Times* (March 17, 1901), 2.

⁸⁰ One newspaper editorial envisioned Carnegie’s gift leading “to the employment of [Tammany favorites] Horgan & Slattery to design sixty-five libraries.” “Tammany and the Libraries,” *New York Times* (March 20, 1901), 8.

⁸¹ Dierickx, 25.

⁸² “The Library Contract,” *New York Times* (July 18, 1901), 6.

⁸³ As one article noted, “Controller [Coler] said that he was not worried over the site questions and that there were many rich men ready to contribute.” “Library Bill Underway,” *New York Times* (March 19, 1901), 3. In the end, the city had to purchase nearly all of the sites outright, sometimes through the lengthy process of eminent domain.

⁸⁴ The full text of the contract is reproduced in *Analysis of the Funds*, Appendix B, 96-99.

⁸⁵ *Analysis of the Funds*, Appendix E, 105-06.

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libraries were actually completed by the NYPL: twenty six in Manhattan; nine in the Bronx, and four on Staten Island.

Many of the branches in fact cost well over \$80,000. The Seward Park Branch, the most expensive Carnegie library in the city, was billed at \$151,153 for construction costs alone.⁸⁶ Ten others (seven in Manhattan and three in the Bronx) topped \$100,000. Only the Staten Island branches, along with one or two in the Bronx, were significantly less expensive than originally planned.

Soon after the contract was ratified in 1901, the NYPL hired attorney Alanson T. Briggs as Agent for Carnegie Sites of The New York Public Library (he was also later hired by the Brooklyn and Queens systems in a similar capacity). He consulted on site selection, helped appraise potential locations, and acted as legal counsel if necessary. He also served as liaison between the NYPL—which had power over the selection of sites—and the city, which ultimately funded the acquisitions.

Briggs and the NYPL, in consultation with Carnegie, developed a clearly articulated philosophy of site selection. They wanted the libraries to be in the heart of densely settled neighborhoods, on conspicuous sites where people would pass them frequently. Proximity to related institutions such as schools, museums, and social organizations was also encouraged. As NYPL secretary Rives noted:

The Trustees are of the opinion that in establishing branch libraries it is of great importance to established them, as far as possible, in conspicuous positions on well frequented streets. In some measure the same principles should be applied that would govern in the selection of a site for a retail store. The fact that a branch library is constantly before the eyes of the neighboring residents so that all are familiar with its location will undoubtedly tend to increase its usefulness.⁸⁷

Final approval for site selection was granted by the city's Board of Estimate and Apportionment.⁸⁸ After acquisition the city retained ownership and leased the land to the NYPL. In the end, the city paid more than \$1.6 million for the NYPL Carnegie sites—about half what Carnegie donated for the buildings.

Also in 1901, the NYPL appointed a temporary committee of architects consisting of Charles F. McKim, John M. Carrère, and Walter Cook to assist the library in determining the best way to proceed with the design and construction of the new branches. The group issued several broad recommendations, particularly that “Every one of these buildings ought to be of one distinctive and uniform type, so that the most ignorant child going through the streets of the City will at once know a Carnegie Library when he or she sees it.”⁸⁹ This meant that all of the libraries would have generally the same scale and plan, would use similar materials, and, most importantly, would be uniform in architectural style, following “in a broad general way certain Italian precedents.”⁹⁰

⁸⁶ The site cost an additional \$216,500, for a total project cost of \$367,653.

⁸⁷ Lydenberg, “Moving the New York Public Library,” *Library Journal* 36 (June 1911), 296-297, cited in Dain, 237.

⁸⁸ The agency in charge of site approval was a source of minor controversy. As one account noted, “The power to approve...the purchase of sites will be taken away from the Municipal Assembly, as the city officials assert that the library plan might be delayed for a year or more if the Aldermen and the Councilmen should dispute over the location of the libraries.” “Library Bill Underway,” *New York Times* (March 19, 1901), 3.

⁸⁹ Letter from John S. Billings to Andrew Carnegie, November 9, 1901, quoted in LPC, *Port Richmond Branch*, 5.

⁹⁰ Quoted in Koch, 36.

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The committee recognized that the architects would have to respond to the conditions of each site, which would inevitably introduce a certain variety between branches while maintaining the overall uniformity of design. NYPL Secretary Rives compared the design program to the famous Columbian Exhibition in Chicago, “where it has been desired to put up adjacent buildings exhibiting a uniformity of type, but of some individual diversity.”⁹¹

While Carnegie favored an open competition to determine the architect of each branch, the temporary committee recommended the formation of a permanent advisory council comprising two to five architecture firms that would design all of the buildings, working in close cooperation. NYPL leadership agreed with the architects, believing that “The best solution... would be found not in competition, but in collaboration” and that “it was plain that too large a number of architects would not be able to work together in as efficient a manner as a comparatively small number.”⁹² Carnegie ultimately relented and the permanent Advisory Committee of Architects was established, consisting of the same exact architects as the temporary committee.

The first Carnegie-funded NYPL branch (and the first in New York City) was in fact not designed by a member of the Advisory Committee but by James Brown Lord (April 26, 1859 - June 1, 1902). The Yorkville Branch became part of the NYPL with the merger of the New York Free Circulating Library and the planning process for its new building was already underway when the Carnegie announced his gift to the city. Completed in 1902, this branch (along with the earlier Brown Lord-designed Bloomingdale Branch) helped establish the general form that was to characterize the Manhattan Carnegie libraries. The remainder of the Manhattan buildings were spread fairly evenly between the members of the Advisory Committee: McKim, Meade & White designed nine; Babb, Cook & Willard and its successors designed eight; and Carrère & Hastings designed seven. Herts & Tallant were commissioned to expand the Aguilar Branch, a building they had originally designed for the Aguilar Free Library in 1898-99 before it merged with the NYPL. All of the Manhattan buildings were completed by the spring of 1914—just before the outbreak of World War I precipitated a shortage of building supplies and a year before the Carnegie Corporation began rethinking its building program.

The nine Carnegie libraries in the Bronx were also fairly evenly divided between the members of the Advisory Committee of Architects: Babb, Cook & Welch designed two; McKim, Mead & White designed three, and Carrère & Hastings designed four. Seven were completed by the spring of 1914, before WWI greatly slowed building activity. The Fordham Branch was finished in 1923. Hunt’s Point, the last of the Carnegie libraries in New York City, was completed in 1929 using unforeseen money from the Carnegie account.⁹³

On Staten Island, the NYPL consulted a local committee of residents on site selection. They recommended establishing a large central library in St. George and five smaller local branches throughout the borough.⁹⁴ In the end, only the central library and three branches were actually completed, all designed by Carrère & Hastings and completed by 1907.

Of the 39 Carnegie-funded buildings built under the NYPL program, six have been demolished and an additional three have been decommissioned but are still extant serving a different use. Thirty are still in use as branch libraries, representing a significant portion of the current branch system of the NYPL.

⁹¹ “Erection of the Carnegie Libraries,” *New York Times* (October 17, 1901), 16.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Dierickx, 109.

⁹⁴ These were to be located in Port Richmond, West New Brighton, Stapleton, New Drop, and Tottenville. Lydenberg, 414.

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The BPL Carnegie Program

The contracts for the libraries in Brooklyn and Queens were very similar to those with the NYPL—although there were a few minor differences of language since the BPL and QPL were still at that time both public intuitions, fully funded by the city, rather than a semi-public corporation like the NYPL.⁹⁵ Though the documents were finalized in early August 1901, it took several months for them to be officially ratified by Carnegie and city officials, a situation much lamented in the local press.⁹⁶ Brooklyn’s was the last to be signed, going into effect October 7, 1901.

Brooklyn’s contract contained all of the usual terms and conditions—that the city would provide the sites and provide yearly maintenance of at least 10 percent of the gift amount, and that the libraries remain open “at all reasonable hours and times.”⁹⁷ It reiterated the grant amount, \$1.6 million for 20 libraries, and stipulated that no more than seven could be built in any calendar year.

Whereas the NYPL contract vested administrative powers to the institution as a whole, the Brooklyn and Queens documents named small “Carnegie Committees” to oversee the grants in those boroughs. Brooklyn’s consisted of former mayor and BPL president Boody as chair, R. Ross Appleton, John W. Devoy, and Daniel W. McWilliams—all BPL trustees. This group was given substantial discretion in administering the gift. According to the local press, “Aside from the supervisory function of the Board of Estimate, the special committee of the Brooklyn Public Library will have almost absolute control of the library situation in the borough.”⁹⁸

Though vested with considerable power and shielded from most political wrangling, the Brooklyn committee still faced two fraught tasks—the selection of sites and the selection of architects. In both matters the Brooklyn contingent showed considerable deference to their NYPL counterparts. The day after the Brooklyn contract was signed, the local newspaper noted that, “The four directors have agreed...they will work in harmony with the New York Public Library directors, so far as it may be possible to do so.”⁹⁹ It even went so far as to assert that “The buildings themselves, in external design, will be practically uniform with those to be constructed in Manhattan.”¹⁰⁰

In terms of site selection, the BPL committee hired the same attorney, Alanson T. Briggs, as the NYPL to oversee the process. He consulted on the choice of locations and appraised their value, acted as legal counsel, and served as liaison to the city. By November 1901 the BPL had chosen five locations and sent them to the Board of Estimate and Apportionment for final approval. This request was temporarily delayed by the change of administration but was ultimately approved. The Brooklyn sites committee even crowed that, “Although the committee for sites in Manhattan had several months start of us their work is not nearly so far along as ours. There is no reason why Brooklyn should not get its libraries earlier than any other borough.”¹⁰¹ In fact the first

⁹⁵ As the *Eagle* noted, “The Brooklyn (and Queens) contract “differs from the contract with the New York Public Library officials somewhat, as the Brooklyn Public Library is a public city institution supported altogether by the city, while the New York institution is only a semi-public corporation.” “Mr. Carnegie Approves Library Contract,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (September 9, 1901), 20.

⁹⁶ “Work on New Libraries May Be Begun Soon,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (October 8, 1901), 20. Part of the delays was due to fact that Billings had to deliver the contract via steamer to Carnegie, who was summering in Scotland.

⁹⁷ The full text of the contract is reproduced in *Analysis of the Funds*, Appendix C, 100-02.

⁹⁸ “Committees to Agree on Carnegie Libraries,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (October 20, 1901), 48.

⁹⁹ “Work on New Libraries May Be Begun Soon,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (October 8, 1901), 20.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ “Carnegie Library Sites,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (December 18, 1901), 1.

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library branch in New York City fully designed and planned under the Carnegie grant was the Pacific Branch, opened October 8, 1903.

On the matter of architecture, the Brooklyn Carnegie Committee followed the general model established by the NYPL—even if the buildings themselves developed their own distinct character. To begin the process, the committee hired A. D. F. Hamlin, a Columbia University professor of architecture in the School of Engineering, to form an Advisory Commission of Architects consisting of chair J. Monroe Hewlett of Lord & Hewlett, secretary Raymond F. Almirall, Rudolph L. Daus, William B. Tubby, and Richard A. Walker of Walker & Morris.¹⁰² The number of members corresponded to the five initial sites chosen by Briggs and the BPL leadership.¹⁰³

Hamlin and the Brooklyn Carnegie Committee then worked out a methodology for the first round of libraries. Each of the five firms was commissioned to create a preliminary design for a specific branch, working in close collaboration with each other and in consultation with a librarian and Hamlin. The plans were then sent to the Carnegie Committee “as preliminary and suggestive sketches, to assist the committee in reaching definite conclusions regarding the type or types of the proposed libraries and in determining as to what features and requirements would be insisted upon uniformly for all the libraries.”¹⁰⁴ Final working drawings were produced incorporating the committee’s suggestions, resulting (the committee hoped) in “unity of general type and character...without the sacrifice of that individuality which gives interest to a design.”¹⁰⁵ The committee further reserved the decision “as to whether the remaining fifteen libraries or any part of them shall be assigned to the members of the advisory commission, the decision depending largely upon the results of the work...upon the five first erected.”¹⁰⁶

The committee need not have worried. The first five Brooklyn Carnegie Libraries were all widely praised in the architectural press, especially for their innovative planning.¹⁰⁷ The firms composing the BPL Advisory Commission of Architects would go on to design all of the Brooklyn Carnegie Libraries except for the Washington Irving Branch, which was designed by Edward L. Tilton of Tilton & Githens and completed well after the other branches in 1923.

The Brooklyn Carnegie Committee mostly stayed true to its promise to deliver its Carnegie libraries before (or at least on par with) the NYPL. Of the 21 branches in Brooklyn, all but four were completed by 1908. Three more were finished in mid 1910s, including the Stone Avenue Branch, which was conceived as the Brownsville Children’s Library and intended to serve children exclusively.

Of the 21 Carnegie BPL branches, only three have been demolished. The remaining 18 are still in use as libraries and form a significant portion of the current branch system of the BPL.

¹⁰² Some commentators bemoaned the lack of “local pride” in the selection of architects, although both Daus and Tubby were based in Brooklyn, Hewlett grew up in the borough, and Almirall was a current resident and had studied in its schools. “Selection of Architects,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (December 2, 1901), 11.

¹⁰³ “Five Districts Named for Carnegie Libraries,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (November 20, 1901), 5.

¹⁰⁴ “Five Districts Named for Carnegie Libraries,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (November 20, 1901), 5.

¹⁰⁵ “Five Districts Named for Carnegie Libraries,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (November 20, 1901), 5.

¹⁰⁶ “Five Districts Named for Carnegie Libraries,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (November 20, 1901), 5.

¹⁰⁷ The Williamsburgh and Bedford Branches in particular were called “perhaps the most interesting and satisfactory type of branch library building yet evolved.” *The Library Journal* 28 (March 1903), 103, quoted in Dierickx, 35.

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The Queens Carnegie Program

The contract for the Carnegie libraries in Queens—“almost identical in substance” to the Brooklyn document—was formally executed September 27, 1901, and allocated \$240,000 to the borough.¹⁰⁸ Initially plans had called for only three libraries at \$80,000 apiece, but as one newspaper noted, “In a territory where population is widely distributed the library buildings should not be so large nor so expensive...It would be a waste of money to spend \$80,000 for a library building in Jamaica, Flushing or Far Rockaway.”¹⁰⁹ The final contract, agreed to by Carnegie, allowed for the construction of up to eight branches provided that none cost less than \$20,000.¹¹⁰

Like the BPL agreement, the Queens contract named a designated “Carnegie Committee”—comprising three members of the QPL Board of Trustees, including Walter G. Frey, Walter L. Bogert, and Philip Frank—to administer the Carnegie grant in Queens.

Also like both the NYPL and BPL, site selection and acquisition for the Queens Carnegie libraries was overseen by attorney Briggs. In College Point, local residents helped raise funds for the Poppenhusen Branch, while in Far Rockaway the city already owned the land that was leased to the QPL.¹¹¹ Elsewhere the QPL followed its plan to “erect buildings from the Carnegie fund first at all the places where we have branches established, for the reason that we will in that way save paying rent.”¹¹²

Following the lead of the other systems, in 1902 the QPL appointed an Advisory Committee of Architects, consisting of Lord & Hewlett (which was also on the Brooklyn committee) and Heins & LaFarge. These firms were selected from fourteen that had applied for the position. Lord & Hewlett ultimately designed three branches in Queens, and Heins & LaFarge only one. Tuthill & Higgins were appointed to the committee somewhat after the fact and designed two. The final library, built well after the others, was designed by library architect Robert F. Schirmer.

Of all the systems, the QPL was the fastest to complete its Carnegie program. Of the eight projected buildings, six were completed by 1906. Two additional libraries in Jamaica and Long Island City were planned but never built.¹¹³ The Woodhaven Branch, completed in 1924, was only partially funded by money remaining in the Carnegie account at the tail end of the program. Of the three library systems in New York City, the Queens Carnegie libraries have fared the poorest. Three of the original seven buildings have been demolished and another, the Astoria Branch, has lost many of its character-defining features.

The Architecture of New York City’s Carnegie Libraries

Andrew Carnegie’s gift of 67 branch libraries to New York City was his largest gift to any one city. But because the five boroughs of the city had within them three independent library systems, as well as vast differences in population density and topography, it was impossible for the Carnegie libraries to be all alike. But

¹⁰⁸ “Library Plan Approved by Board of Estimate,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (September 11, 1901), 18. The full text of the contract is reproduced in *Analysis of the Funds*, Appendix D, 102-05.

¹⁰⁹ “Our Share of the Carnegie Fund,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (July 18, 1901), 4.

¹¹⁰ City Controller Colers wrote, “Personally I approve of this change because it does not seem to me that the conditions in this borough call for the erection of as expensive buildings as would be the case in the Borough of Brooklyn, and the territory is so large that three library buildings would scarcely serve the population.” “Library Plan Approved by Board of Estimate,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (September 11, 1901), 18.

¹¹¹ *Library Journal* 34, 213.

¹¹² “Queens Wants \$400,000,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (July 19, 1901), 16.

¹¹³ *Report of the Queens Borough Public Library*, 12.

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within their differences, there was a unity of philosophy and design. Some of the principles were dictated by Carnegie and his Library Fund, while others were worked out between the design committees for the three independent library systems.

One of the mandates of a Carnegie Library was that it had to be centrally located, so that all patrons had easy access to it. Close proximity to public buildings was another necessity. All of New York's Carnegie Libraries were located near schools, social service centers, public baths or YM/YWCAs. The New York City Carnegie branch libraries were designed to be distinct structures, a new concept at the turn of the twentieth century when most branches were simply located in other buildings. They were intended to be important fixtures in the community and centrally located in a neighborhood.

All of the New York libraries had an apartment built within for a live-in custodian. This space was usually in the basement, although some Manhattan and Bronx libraries had an attic floor. Some libraries utilized such a custodian well into the 1980s. Most, however, turned that space into library or storage use. Since almost all of the Carnegie Libraries have had their interiors modernized and renovated to some degree, the custodian spaces are long gone.

Carnegie was a big proponent of symbolism. He wanted stairs rising to the entrance of the library, even if only a few. These stairs symbolized the reader stepping up into learning and self-improvement. A light post or lantern by the entry symbolized enlightenment.

Once inside, the patron encountered a large central reception desk. These desks could be quite enormous, serving both a symbolic and practical need. Carnegie libraries were the first to encourage open stacks, where a reader could wander through rows of books, choosing his or her own reading material. Traditionally, libraries had closed stacks behind the librarian's desk. Readers would fill out a slip and hand it to a librarian who would find the book and hand it to the reader. This was not only limiting to the reader, it was labor intensive and time consuming for the staff, especially as public library use increased.

Practically speaking, the large circulation desk enabled the librarians to keep an eye on the entire library. The desks were located in the center, so the reading rooms and the stacks could both be observed. Many desks had turnstiles leading to the stacks, thus limiting the speed and access of patrons, enabling the librarians to watch for theft and other transgressions.

Carnegie Libraries all had similar layouts. The ground floor had the circulation desk in the center, with reading rooms and stacks to the sides. The adult reading room was on one side, and the children's reading room was on the other. All of the Carnegie libraries had a children's reading room. Encouraging children to read and frequent the library was one of the great goals of the Carnegie legacy. Libraries with two or more floors often had their children's reading rooms on the second floor. Sharing the floor would be more stacks and other reading rooms. Offices were usually on the top floor.

The children's reading rooms were decorated with children in mind, also a new concept. Most had fireplaces, which were gathering spots for group readings and other programs. Decorative tiles, built-in bench seating, smaller tables and chairs and other features helped make the children's reading room attractive and interesting for children.

The buildings, no matter what their architectural style, were designed with large windows, to allow in natural light and ventilation. Interior lighting was also important. Most libraries were built with many large

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“schoolhouse” style pendant lights, which illuminated both the reading tables and the stacks. Carnegie libraries had simple interiors. Adequate space for books and people took precedence over ornament, but even with that, the interiors were well appointed and had a simple elegance. The architects also planned suitable bathroom facilities and water fountains.

While there were certainly many similarities to the city’s libraries, there were also great stylistic differences. Available space for libraries, population density, topography and location were all factors in the buildings that make up the Carnegie Libraries. Add to that the differences in budget, materials and stylistic preferences between the three systems, the resulting libraries of the New York Public Library, Brooklyn Public Library and Queens Borough Public Library’s Carnegie buildings are quite varied.

Manhattan

The Carnegie Library branches in Manhattan were all built for a crowded urban environment. Land was very expensive, so with only one or two exceptions, all of the Manhattan branches were built midblock, all with entrances right on the sidewalk. There are no setbacks or lawns in the Manhattan Carnegie libraries.

At the beginning of the design process, the three principal design firms, Babb, Cook & Willard, Carrère & Hastings, and McKim, Mead & White, all agreed to design complementary buildings. They would be classically inspired, in a pared-down Beaux-Arts or Renaissance Revival style. Two of them are in a Federal/Colonial Revival style. The Aguilar branch, by architect Hugh Tallant, was a modification and enlargement of an existing library structure and still falls into the classical mode.

The land for all of the Manhattan libraries was purchased by the City of New York for the New York Public Library, with the partial exception of the Aguilar Branch. The building already existed and was built by the philanthropy of Grace Aguilar (1816-1847), a popular British novelist and essayist of Sephardic Jewish descent, aided by other affluent New York Jewish families. Incorporated in 1886, the Aguilar Free Library was among only a few circulating libraries built specifically to benefit poorer Jewish immigrants in New York.

Of the remaining libraries, 16 are limestone faced, two are Flemish bond red brick, and the Federal/Colonial Revival Seward Park branch is an equal mixture of both. Most of them are three stories in height, with a three-bay structure. The entrance is to one side, with two large windows adjacent on the ground floor. The second floor has three large windows, and the top floor has three smaller windows.

There are exceptions to this model. Chatham Square, Epiphany, Fort Washington, Seward Park and Hamilton Grange are all larger buildings and have four bays, four windows, etc. All three architectural firms expanded their basic template when they had the room.

All of the libraries have “New York Public Library” in capital letters, prominently carved into the façade, either just above the doorway or in a frieze below the cornice. Babb, Cook & Willard were fond of spelling “Public” with the Roman-style “PVBLIC.”

The classical styling of the urban Manhattan libraries gave them gravitas and importance, especially in less affluent neighborhoods. Because the architects made them as beautiful and stately as those in wealthier neighborhoods, they instilled pride and hope to the less fortunate. The message was that not only did Andrew Carnegie care as much about libraries for the poor as for the rich, but that if one utilized the facilities given, one could rise above his/her present station. This message was taken to heart by people of all ethnicities and groups.

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The Bronx

Since the Bronx was also a part of the New York Public Library system, the same architects designed the branch libraries. But that is where the similarities end. Of the original Carnegie Libraries still standing in the Bronx, only one, the Woodstock branch, resembles the Renaissance Revival palazzos of its Manhattan counterparts. This library, by McKim, Mead & White, is almost identical to the firm's 40th Street branch, which was built the year before, in 1913.

The remaining Bronx branches share similarities with each other. Land in the Bronx was cheaper than in Manhattan, so the Bronx libraries tend to have larger footprints, but are not as tall. The Kingsbridge library is actually much smaller. The majority of them are on corner lots, also differing from Manhattan. The Mott Haven and Melrose branches were built with three stories, although the third story was later removed from the Melrose branch. All the rest of the Bronx libraries are two stories tall, a feature that they have in common with their counterparts in Brooklyn, Staten Island and Queens.

Manhattan's urbane limestone palazzos were exchanged for more economical brick in the Bronx. Instead of classical European style, the Bronx libraries are designed in a later neo-Federal/Colonial style. Flemish bond red brick dominates, with flashes of limestone trim. The libraries still retain large arched windows for maximum light. Of course, since the three firms who designed the libraries were among the best in the city, these brick buildings are still high quality design.

Carrère & Hastings's brick Renaissance Revival design for the Hunts Point branch is as masterful as any of their limestone branches in Manhattan. This was their last library out of the 14 they designed for New York. Here they used terra cotta ornamental arches to outline the seven bays. This is their only use of terra cotta. This is also the only branch with a freestanding garage built by the original architects. It was used to house the Bronx Book Wagon that travelled around the borough.

The Mott Haven branch, built in 1905, by Babb, Cook & Willard, was the first Carnegie library to be built in the Bronx. It is an Italian Renaissance style building, with three stories. It is constructed of Flemish bond red brick with prominent heavy limestone trim. The large white quoins on the building's corners are the most prominent features, echoed by similar ornamentation in the voussoir in the imposing entryway. This library is a much simplified, but very similar version of the same firm's Fifth Avenue mansion for Andrew Carnegie himself.

The exception to many of the rules is the Kingsbridge Branch. Unlike all of the other branches in both the Bronx and Manhattan, the Kingsbridge Branch is set back on a rectangular plot. It is the smallest of the Bronx branches. The grounds are surrounded by an iron fence. The library is reached by a pathway from the sidewalk, accessed by two stone steps. The building itself is reached by climbing five steps up another set of stone stairs.

Designed by McKim, Mead & White, the building is in the Neo-Federal style. The façade is symmetrically divided into three bays. Walls are made of Flemish bond red brick with simple decorative limestone details. A wooden oversized pedimented entrance, now painted white, projects from the central bay of the first floor. The building originally had multi-paned sidelights and transoms which have been filled in. Today, the building is no longer a library.

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Staten Island

The New York Public Library system also extends to Staten Island. There, Carnegie funds were provided to build four libraries. All four libraries were designed by the firm of Carrère & Hastings between 1904 and 1907. Staten Island was the least populated borough in New York City. Because of its suburban and rural nature, the design of the libraries was changed. Gone was the urban townhouse, replaced by suburban style buildings. The building design is inspired by classical architecture as seen in its symmetrical layout, entrance portico with Tuscan columns, and arched windows, yet its hipped shingle roof creates a subtle rustic bungalow-style quality.

The Stapleton, Tottenville and Port Richmond libraries are almost identical. All are on larger lots surrounded by lawn. The Stapleton and Port Richmond library buildings are accessed by stairs that reach almost to the sidewalk. The Tottenville branch is set back further from the street and is approached by a walkway. The buildings are all freestanding and placed prominently in the streetscape, as per directive, near schools and other public buildings.

The building plan of all three is a typical symmetrical layout with a central entrance leading to a room containing the librarians' station, which was flanked on two sides by reading rooms. The buildings are one story tall and five bays wide with a projecting center entrance. The exterior walls consist of Flemish bond red brick with quoined limestone trim which encases the arched windows at the both wings. The full-height center shallow entrance wing is articulated with wood Tuscan columns flanked with brick piers which support a full wood pediment and decorative frieze. The windows are all arched with an arched transom window over rectangular panes.

The St. George branch, intended as the central library for Staten Island, is much larger. This library is located near Borough Hall and the Staten Island Ferry Terminal. the most urban part of the island, Because of its placement, the design represents a mixture of urban and suburban architecture. At three-stories, the building is taller than other three branches on Staten Island, yet the hipped slate shingle roof creates a similarly suburban feeling. As originally built, the primary eastern and western elevations were designed in the Classical Revival style with nine bays arranged symmetrically around central entrances flanked by limestone columns in the Doric style.¹¹⁴ The building is built of Flemish bond red brick with limestone trim. Because the site slopes down from west to east, the building is two stories tall at one end and three at the other. In 1952 the branch was enlarged with a T-shaped addition, shifting the main entrance to Hyatt Street; it harmonized with the original design in the use of Flemish-bond brick work, a low slate shingle roof, and limestone trim.

The uniformity of the Staten Island Carnegie Libraries still allowed them to be prominent in the space procured for them. A Carnegie Library was unmistakable. Although the buildings have been upgraded, altered and enlarged by additions, they are all still in use as libraries. No other borough can make that claim.

Brooklyn

The architects working for the Brooklyn Public Library's Carnegie Library Committee also coordinated among themselves and with the Manhattan and Queens architects. Although many of Brooklyn's proposed libraries were in dense urban areas, it was decided to design all of the branches in a more suburban style, not like the urban townhouses of Manhattan. The cost of land here was less expensive, allowing for more corner lots, and large plots where the library could stand out from the rest of the streetscape. The sites committee requested that

¹¹⁴ The entrance on Central Avenue remains intact, while the more prominent entrance facing Bay Street was removed during the 1952 addition.

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the Board of Estimate obtain lots of least 100 by 100 feet, which would be large enough to allow sufficient light and air on at least three sides of the library.

The Brooklyn Carnegie Libraries are all freestanding structures. Since most of the libraries are in heavily populated urban areas, many have entrances right onto the street. The Bedford, Brownsville, Carroll Gardens, Eastern Parkway, Leonard, Macon, Park Slope, Stone Avenue and Walt Whitman branches open to the sidewalk. The Bushwick, DeKalb, Flatbush, Fort Hamilton, Pacific, Saratoga, Washington Irving and Williamsburg branches are all set back a bit from the street, although not to the extent of the suburban branches of the Staten Island or Bronx branches.

With the exception of the Stone Avenue, Eastern Parkway, Flatbush and Brownsville Branches, all of the Brooklyn Carnegie Libraries are made of red or reddish-brown brick with limestone accents. The Flatbush and Brownsville libraries were constructed in sand-colored brick with limestone trim. The Flatbush Branch, originally designed by Rudolph L. Daus, was completely re-designed in 1937 in a late Art Deco-style modernization and enlargement by Jack C. Street and John R. Petter.

Many of the libraries feature red brick walls accented with a minimum of limestone ornamentation. Most were built in a Classical Revival style; the buildings have a symmetrical layout, tall, large windows to allow an abundance of light into the reading rooms, and a prominent, decorative entrance. The architects of the Carnegie Library committee coordinated their designs well, keeping them pretty uniform in size and appearance. But the chance to create something truly special and different caused some of the architects to break away from the template.

Raymond Almirall broke out of the mold not once, but three times, creating the most varied and eclectic styles within the Brooklyn Carnegie Library system. He began with the Pacific Branch, which is located on a corner lot at the intersection of 4th Avenue and Pacific Street. This two-story, three-bay-wide building consists of a rectangular structure with a front entrance that faces 4th Avenue and a semi-circular rear section. The unusual apsidal plan was designed to allow the maximum amount of light into the reading rooms. The library's unique hipped and conical roof features a dormer window at the ridgeline.

Inside, light streams into the more than 15,000 square foot interior from all sides. An open staircase with original dark wood wainscoting and thin wooden balusters leads to the spacious second-story reading room. In the middle of the apse are ornate reading nooks with wainscoting. In the center is an original fireplace with green tiles, surrounded by a wooden hooded mantel. This branch was lauded for its design, which is unique to the city's Carnegie Libraries.¹¹⁵

Almirall also excelled in his Park Slope Branch. The library is sited on a raised and bermed lot, which comprises the entire blockfront of 6th Avenue between 8th and 9th Streets. Following a T-shaped plan, two large wings flank a projecting entrance portico. Each wing contains one of the two principal reading rooms, one for children and the other for adults. The impressive two-story, seven-bay brick Classical Revival structure has three double-height rectangular windows on either side of the central portico.

The interior design of this branch is particularly notable. It is one of the few Carnegie libraries to have most of its original details intact. In this case, that includes a great deal of original stained-glass panels, original woodwork, and the original fireplaces. This was no doubt one of the most ornate interiors of New York's

¹¹⁵ A plan of the branch was featured in the *Library Journal* in March 1903, which applauded the building's abundance of light and efficient circulation. Cited in Dierickx, 85.

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Carnegie Libraries, which were more typically simple on the inside, both to save money and to allow for more books and space for people. Here, Almirall managed to do both—elaborately ornament the space, while allowing plenty of room.

An entirely different approach was taken by Almirall in his Eastern Parkway Branch. Eastern Parkway was the jewel of Brooklyn's roadways, a grand and wide boulevard designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux from 1870 to 1874 (State and National Register listed 1983). The Eastern Parkway Branch is unusual in that it is constructed to the building line and is faced entirely in limestone (like the Manhattan Carnegies), as opposed to brick with stone trim. In this way, the library complements the large houses of worship, banks and schools nearby. Although the limestone cladding lends itself to more ornament, this is actually the simplest of Almirall's branches. He lets the stone speak for itself. His carved ornamentation is classic and very subtle. The Eastern Parkway façade is five bays with a central entrance. The Schenectady Avenue elevation is four bays wide. The three bays closest to Eastern Parkway feature arched windows and exterior features identical to those on the façade. Inside, the library was originally a large open space, one story in height with tall ceilings. The ceiling has since been dropped to accommodate another upper floor.

As builders were constructing the Brownsville Carnegie Library, it became apparent that it would be too small for the growing immigrant population of the neighborhood and a separate library would be needed for the children. William Tubby took on the design, creating a library that would appeal specifically to children. The Stone Avenue Branch was originally called the Brownsville Children's Library. Unlike all of the other Carnegie libraries, this one does not have a central entrance, but has two doorways in the corner tower. It is a unique Jacobean-style building, reminiscent of a castle. The building has a corner tower with bay windows and a crenelated parapet. It is built of dark red Harvard brick, laid in an English Cross Bond with Dutch Corners. Like all Carnegie Libraries, Tubby designed this one with large windows that extend on all sides.

Inside, the library still has many of its original features, including Jacobean ceilings with plaster ribs and triangular and polygonal panels, plaster ornamentation on the square-shaped piers and around the windows, a storybook-themed fireplace surround with Rockwood tiles, and some original furniture by Merritt & Company, including children's benches featuring carved rabbits on the arm rests. The first branch librarian, Clara W. Hunt, collaborated directly with the planners to make the building specifically a children's branch.

The final library design in Brooklyn to stray from the Classical Revival style was the Washington Irving Branch designed by Edward L. Tilton. He was not part of the original design team but worked often with James Bertram, the administrator of the Carnegie funds. He specialized in the design of libraries and designed Carnegie Libraries across the United States. This is his only New York City Carnegie Library. He designed it in 1923, well after all the other libraries were finished and after the death in 1916 of Rudolph Daus, chairman of the Brooklyn Architectural Committee. This was the last Carnegie Library to be built in Brooklyn.

Tilton designed it in the Tudor Revival Style, which lent itself well to libraries and was also a very popular architectural style in residential architecture at the time. Unlike the other Brooklyn libraries, the Washington Irving Branch sits on an enormous 10,000-square foot lot, with a lawn in front and small trees in back. The main section of this two-story building faces Irving Avenue in Bushwick and consists of a large space topped by a gabled slate roof, with a central protruding entrance bay with its own gabled roof. The smaller rear section contains two sections with gabled roofs.

The sides of the entrance bay's front wall are shaped in the manner of two stepped Gothic buttresses. The non-original entrance doors are recessed under a flat Elizabethan arch flanked by two stone buttress ornaments and

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stone tabs. Above the arch is the inscription “Brooklyn Public Library; Irving Branch” engraved in a Gothic script. In the center of the gabled section of the brick wall is a square stone panel with two torches wrapped in a ribbon, which flank a shield with an open book. This is a common decorative feature used at several Carnegie branches, including Chatham Square in Manhattan, Poppenhusen in Queens, and Stone Avenue in Brooklyn.

The interior is simple, with an arched ceiling in the main section. The library retains its two original fireplaces with ceramic tiles with colorful floral and geometric designs, a carved wooden Tudor-arched surround with intricate spandrels, and hooded, oak-paneled mantels with smaller Tudor arches with one flower carved in each spandrel.

Queens

Like Staten Island, the Queens branches were designed for a suburban, low-density environment. Here in Queens the plots of land were even less expensive and allowed for the branch libraries to sit on larger plots, surrounded by lawns and plantings. The Carnegie Library Fund built seven branches in Queens, of which only four remain.

All of these are on corner lots, located on prominent streets, near schools, transportation and civic centers. They are characterized by a single story, although the basements are used for library purposes as well. Three were built between 1904 and 1906, and the last branch was built in 1924. Local firm Tuthill & Higgins designed two of the libraries. Heins & Lafarge, a Manhattan-based firm recommended to the Queens Borough Library Committee by their Manhattan counterparts, designed the Poppenhusen Branch. Robert F. Schirmer, another Queens architect, designed the last library, the Woodhaven Branch.

Like the majority of their suburban style counterparts in Brooklyn and Staten Island, the libraries are designed in a Classical Revival style, mixing brick with limestone trim. The Richmond Hill Branch, by Tuthill & Higgins, is constructed in the Classical Revival style of saffron-colored bricks, the same kind Tuthill used in building Carnegie Hall in 1889. The building is situated on a triangular lot, with a large lawn and several trees. The library consists of the original three bay wide Classical Revival building that faces Hillside Avenue, and a 1929 southern annex that is three bays long and one bay wide. This library does not have as many windows as do other suburban branches, but the fenestration here is wide and brings much needed light in on all sides.

The library’s interior contains a number of original features, which include column details, the mezzanine above the wooden book stacks, and an original fireplace with brown and saffron bricks. The highlight of the interior is the mural, *The Story of Richmond Hill* (1936-7) by Philip Evergood (1901-1975). Funded by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the colorful 160 square foot mural depicts the history of the neighborhood, which began as one of New York’s early working-class garden suburbs. The artwork then illustrates the hard lives of newly arrived immigrants, who work hard to better their lives amid brick tenements. A factory and elevated subway can be seen in the upper right hand corner.

The Astoria Branch, also by Tuthill & Higgins, was originally designed in the Flemish Revival style, with an angled corner entrance, curved and stepped gable roofline, and two distinctive chimneys rising up to flank the façade. A set of curved steps led to the doorway. The back of the building is curved, forming an apsidal section. The building is constructed with saffron-colored bricks, the same kind of bricks Tuthill used in building Carnegie Hall in 1889.

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During the 1930s, the building was heavily renovated through the federal Civil Works Administration. They squared off the angled corner, added windows, and made the building more rectangular. The building lost the Flemish façade and one of the original chimneys. This renovation also widened the basement windows and created a separate children's entrance into the basement. The original interior was also renovated several times, leaving very little original detail.

The Woodhaven Branch by Robert F. Schirmer gives a stylistic nod to the libraries of the Bronx and a nod to the DeKalb Library in Brooklyn. It was designed in 1924 and was only partially funded by Carnegie funds. Schirmer and his partner, J.W. Schmidt, would go on to design the Queens Central Library in 1927. The freestanding rectangular structure is only one story tall, five bays wide and three bays deep. It is the only one of the remaining Queens libraries to be constructed in red brick, which is laid in a simple Flemish Bond with very little limestone ornament.

It references the Bronx libraries with the use of tall arched windows in each bay and, like the DeKalb Branch, the front entrance bay projects slightly forward, while a curved, apsidal section projects more conspicuously outward from the center of the rear wall. The library is topped by a flat roof.

This building had much in common with the now-demolished Elmhurst branch, designed by Lord & Hewlett. Although the Elmhurst Branch had rectangular windows, and was made of saffron colored brick, both branches were plain rectangular buildings with flat roofs and very little ornament. Both buildings were renovated extensively inside and out from the 1930s on, leaving very little detail. The Woodhaven branch even had the large arched windows filled in from top and bottom, leaving much smaller windows in place, resulting in very little natural light inside.

The most ornate of the Queens Borough Carnegie Libraries is the Poppenhusen Branch. It is named after local rubber goods manufacturer and philanthropist Conrad Poppenhusen, who established the first library at the Poppenhusen Institute, a civic building he built for the College Point community. In 1903 the Poppenhusen Institute donated its 3,250 books to the Queens Borough Library, with the condition that the new building bear the name Poppenhusen. The College Point community donated the land for this Carnegie library.

The architects were Manhattan architects Heins & LaFarge, who also designed the early entrances to the IRT Subway system in Manhattan and Brooklyn. In several ways, this library resembles those stations, especially in their general use of brick and limestone. It is one story tall like all of the other Queens Carnegies, but, clad in golden brick with limestone trim, it is the most ornate of all of the Queens libraries. The Poppenhusen library's unusual entrance ornament, heavy cornice, hipped roof and broad stone window enframements make it stand out among other branches. The building is on a landscaped plot with trees and lawn. Originally, the building was T-shaped, but additions made during the 1930s WPA period filled in the T, creating the present-day rectangular building. The facade, which faces 14th Avenue, contains five bays—two pairs of tall, rectangular double-hung windows flanking a central doorway.

The central rear section contains a new circulation desk, modern bookshelves, a portrait bust of Conrad Poppenhusen, and an early or original iron staircase that leads to the basement. The basement interior, which houses the children's library, was refurbished in the mid-2000s. The story room contains an original fireplace that was subsequently filled in.

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The Architects of New York City's Carnegie Libraries

Manhattan, Staten Island and the Bronx

Each of the three library systems had their own committees and criteria for choosing their architects. Since the Carnegie Libraries were an important gift to the city, and would be much scrutinized and admired, the architects and their designs had to be first rate. Neither Andrew Carnegie nor James Bertram dictated their choice of architects. For some of the architects chosen, the Carnegie Libraries would be important career builders. They had guaranteed funding for design and construction, the libraries were prominent social structures that were likely to last the test of time, and the publicity would be instrumental in growing the architects' practices.

The New York Public Library, Brooklyn Public Library and Queens Public Library all set up committees to choose their architects. The Trustee Board of the New York Public Library sat down and chose three of the city's most prestigious architectural firms to design the libraries. There were no design competitions or any of the usual open calls for designs. The firms were Babb, Cook & Willard, Carrère & Hastings and McKim, Mead & White. The three named firms also designed all nine Carnegie branches in the Bronx, while Carrère & Hastings designed all four branches in Staten Island.

When this decision was made in 1901, the first Manhattan library to be built, the Yorkville Branch, at 222 East 79th street, had already been designed by architect James Brown Lord. There was one other notable exception. The firm of Herts & Tallant was called in to design one branch, the Aguilar Branch, on E. 110th Street.

Babb, Cook & Willard

George Fletcher Babb and Walter Cook partnered in 1877. Daniel W. Willard joined them in 1884. They, along with the two other Carnegie firms, were among the most prominent in New York City, building at a time of great wealth and growth. Among their many buildings across the country, Babb, Cook & Willard designed the Metropolitan Life Insurance and DeVinne Press Buildings in Manhattan.

In residential design, they are known for the two houses they designed for Brooklyn's wealthy Pratt family—the Frederick B. Pratt House, now known as the Caroline Ladd Pratt House, and the George DuPont Pratt House, both in Clinton Hill. Their most famous house was designed for Andrew Carnegie himself, no doubt assuring them a place on the Carnegie Library team. The Carnegie home at 5th Avenue and 91st Street is now the Cooper-Hewitt Museum. The firm under this name designed eight Carnegie Libraries. Daniel Willard left the firm and was replaced by Mr. Welsh. In 1913, Cook & Welsh designed two more Carnegie libraries, the Fort Washington Branch on 179th Street, and the West 40th Street Branch.

Carrère & Hastings

Carrère & Hastings was also one of the most prominent firms at the turn of the 20th century. They are credited for bringing Beaux-Arts design to New York. This ornate classically derived style of architecture became especially suited for the City Beautiful aspirations of New York City. Both John Mervin Carrère and Thomas Hastings were educated at the prestigious L'École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where they became friends. They both worked in the offices of McKim, Mead & White before going out on their own.

In Manhattan, their work includes the Henry Clay Frick mansion, the Cunard Building, the interior of the Metropolitan Opera House, and the grand approach to the Manhattan Bridge, as well as Manhattan's Grand

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Army Plaza. Carrère & Hastings designed the New York Public Library's main branch on Fifth Avenue at 40th Street. The library was still being built when Carnegie offered his funds. Their masterful design of this library assured them a place on the design roster. They designed more Carnegie libraries than any other firm, with 14 libraries to their credit.

McKim, Mead & White

McKim, Mead & White was probably the most well-known architectural firm in the United States for almost 40 years, beginning in the late 19th century. Charles Follen McKim and William Rutherford Mead became partners in 1872. Stanford White joined the firm in 1879. McKim and White were the great designers, Mead was the business partner, keeping their many projects on budget and keeping his partners in line.

They began designing large country homes in New England and Newport, combining their interests in American vernacular architecture with the grand designs of Classical Europe. By the turn of the 20th century, they were designing for the City Beautiful—grand marble and limestone civic and commercial buildings such as Manhattan's Pennsylvania Station, the Main Post Office, the Municipal Building, the Washington Square Arch, and most of the campus of Columbia University. In Brooklyn, they designed the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, now the Brooklyn Museum, as well as the entrance to Prospect Park at Grand Army Plaza.

McKim, Mead & White could design lavish and ornate buildings, but they also were masters of more sedate and dignified urban townhouse elegance, perfect for the new Carnegie libraries. They designed ten libraries—seven in Manhattan and three in the Bronx.

James Brown Lord

James Brown Lord was a well-known architect who had worked with Stanford White on the design of the King Model Houses in Harlem. He was adept in the Beaux-Arts style and also designed the famous Delmonico's Restaurant in Lower Manhattan, as well as the ornate Appellate Court building in Madison Square.

Herts & Tallant

Henry Beaumont Herts, another graduate of the Paris École des Beaux-Arts, and partner Hugh Tallant were primarily theater designers. Henry Herts was the designer of the pair. They are best known for their design of the Brooklyn Academy of Music, as well as their many theaters in Manhattan's theater district, including the New Amsterdam, Helen Hayes and New Lyceum Theaters.

Herts & Tallant designed the Aguilar Branch, located at 172 E. 110th Street. This library is actually an expansion and renovation of the first Aguilar Free Library, which was also designed by the firm. The original Art Nouveau library, built in 1898-99, was expanded upon by the Carnegie funding. They retained the intricate iron screening and other details, making this library distinct among the branches.

Brooklyn

The committee to decide where Brooklyn's Carnegie Libraries should be located was headed by Brooklyn's last mayor, David A. Boody. He was now head of the Brooklyn Public Library. He led a committee whose members were drawn from the BPL, borough administration and a group of leading businessmen. The committee

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established a sub-committee of prominent Brooklyn architects who would determine which architects were chosen to design the libraries.

The committee was headed by Rudolph L. Daus, joined by William B. Tubby, J. Monroe Hewlett, Richard A. Walker and Raymond F. Almirall. They decided to each design at least one building themselves and decide how to proceed with the other buildings based on the results of the first five. They ended up designing all of them, except for one library that was added much later. Almirall and Tubby each designed four libraries, Daus, Walker and Hewlett each took three. The final Carnegie library was designed in 1923 by Edward L. Tilton.

Rudolph L. Daus

Chairman Rudolph L. Daus was the Mexico-born son of wealthy German immigrants. He received his architectural training at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, like several of his Manhattan counterparts. He was also quite adept with Beaux-Arts and classically inspired architecture. He worked on his own and also for a time with partner Carl L. Otto, with whom he designed one of the libraries.

Daus's Brooklyn buildings include the 13th Regiment Armory, the NY & NJ Telephone Building, several banks in Brooklyn and Manhattan, as well as hospitals, orphanages, churches, old age homes, row houses and neighborhood buildings for the telephone company. While on this committee, he was in the process of rebuilding and enlarging Brooklyn's Hall of Records. He was also president of the Brooklyn chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

William B. Tubby

William B. Tubby was equally well-known and well-connected. He was born in Brooklyn and received his architectural training in the office of Ezekiel Roberts, who was closely connected to Charles Pratt Sr., the Standard Oil executive and Brooklyn's wealthiest man. Tubby became one of Pratt's favorite architects and commissioned several buildings on the campus of Pratt Institute, including the Pratt Library, Brooklyn's first free library. Tubby also designed a large mansion for Charles W. Pratt, as well as summer mansions for the Pratts and the Pratt Mausoleum in Glen Cove, LI. His career also included row houses, mansions, banks, firehouses, warehouses and factories, and the large Flemish- and Dutch-inspired Wallabout Market.

Raymond F. Almirall

Raymond F. Almirall was also Brooklyn-born and raised. He was also a graduate of the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, coming back to Brooklyn to open his practice. A devout Roman Catholic, he designed churches, chapels and schools, including St. Michael's Catholic Church on 4th Avenue in Sunset Park. He specialized in public buildings such as Public Bath # 7 on 4th Avenue, and the original buildings at Harlem, Fordham and Seaview Hospitals. His grand design for the Central Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library was accepted and begun but was never finished. The walls were incorporated into the later Art Deco structure that still stands. Almirall's Carnegie Libraries are among his best works.

Walker & Morris

Like Almirall, Daus, and several of his Manhattan contemporaries, Richard A. Walker was a graduate of the highly influential École des Beaux-Arts. He came back to New York to work in the offices of Carrère &

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Hastings, as well as Richard Morris Hunt, who had also employed Rudolph Daus at the beginning of his career. Walker then partnered with Charles Morris, another École graduate.

In addition to the three Carnegie Libraries they designed, Walker & Morris were the architects of schools, hospitals, skyscraper office buildings, park and highway viaducts, as well as large city and suburban homes. They also designed the Whitehall Ferry Terminal in Lower Manhattan. Walker lived in Park Slope, which may have led to his design of the Berkeley School, now the Berkeley Carroll School.

Lord & Hewlett

James Monroe Hewlett had an impressive resume. He was a descendant of a prominent Long Island family for whom the town of Hewlett is named. He grew up in Brooklyn, graduated from Columbia University, and went to Paris to study for a year. Upon his return, he began working at McKim, Mead & White.

There he met Austin Willard Lord, who had also studied in Paris. Lord was originally from Minnesota, and he was educated at M.I.T. He came back to NYC after heading the American School of Architecture in Rome. Lord & Hewlett went into a long partnership together, a partnership that for a while included Hugh Tallant, who would also have a Carnegie Library to his name. Lord & Hewlett are best known in Manhattan for the massive mansion they designed on the Upper East Side for William A. Clark.

In addition, they designed the Masonic Temple and Brooklyn Hospital in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, as well as other hospitals, private clubs, buildings on the Smith College campus, and numerous other buildings in America and abroad. Both Lord and Hewlett were prominent fine artists in their own right. They were also chosen to design five Carnegie library branches for the Queens Public Library. Of those five, only one now remains.

Edward Lippincott Tilton

Edward L. Tilton designed the final Carnegie-funded library in Brooklyn in 1923. He was an expert at library design, having designed over 100 of them in the United States and Canada, many of them Carnegie Libraries. He was a friend of James Bertram, Andrew Carnegie's secretary and administrator of the Carnegie Library Fund. Bertram wrote many letters of recommendation to cities across the country looking for architects for their libraries.

Tilton was a New Yorker from a prominent family. Always a talented artist, he gave up his early career in banking to study architecture. He got a job at McKim, Mead & White, where he apprenticed as a draftsman while taking architecture courses with a private tutor. This led to study at the École des Beaux Arts, where he met later partner William A. Boring.

They won a commission in 1897 to design the first buildings in the Ellis Island complex. They designed the iconic Main Building, as well as the Powerhouse, Kitchen and Laundry Building and Hospital. Tilton & Boring amicably dissolved their partnership after that project but remained in the same offices. Tilton also designed the buildings of Concordia College in Bronxville, NY, before specializing in libraries. He also published two works on library planning.¹¹⁶

Queens

¹¹⁶ Edward L. Tilton, A.E. Bostwick and S.H. Ranck, *Essentials in Library Planning* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1928).

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The borough of Queens also set up its own Carnegie Library Committee. It was chaired by Trustees of the Queens Borough Public Library, Dr. Walter G. Frey, Phillip Francke, and Henry A. Bogart. They worked with the Central Committee for the Carnegie libraries in Manhattan in choosing architects and setting up building criteria. The Central Committee chose two of the architects for the Queens branches, leaving Frey and his committee to choose the third. A fourth architect was chosen for the last of the branches, the library built in 1924.

The Central Committee chose Lord & Hewlett, who were already designing three branches in Brooklyn. They designed the Flushing, Far Rockaway, and Elmhurst branches. They also chose the firm of Heins & LaFarge to design the Poppenhusen Branch, the second of the Carnegie Libraries to open in Queens.

Heins & LaFarge

George Lewis Heins and Christopher Grant LaFarge met at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where both studied architecture. Afterwards they both went to work for renowned architect Henry Hobson Richardson. Christopher LaFarge was the son of stained-glass artist and painter John LaFarge. The two men became partners, and family, when George Heins married John LaFarge's youngest sister, who was only two years older than her nephew.

Heins & LaFarge set up practice in New York, where they rose to prominence for their design of the original wing of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. They also designed many of the entrances and subway stations of the first subway in NYC, the Interboro Rapid Transit line. Also in their portfolio are many more churches, two buildings once on the Yale University campus, and the original buildings of the Bronx Zoo.

Tuthill & Higgins

The Queens men chose a local firm, Tuthill & Higgins, to design two libraries, the Astoria and Richmond Hill branches. Cuyler B. Tuthill and John Randolph Higgins had offices in Jamaica. Tuthill studied architecture at Pratt Institute. He is best known for designing Carnegie Hall in 1889, which no doubt served him well in being chosen for these commissions. The firm also designed row houses, suburban mansions, Jamaica Hospital and other buildings in New York, Queens, Long Island and upstate.

Robert F. Schirmer

Robert F. Schirmer was the final architect to build a Queens Carnegie branch. This library was funded by the last of the remaining Carnegie money, plus funding from the City of New York. The architect, along with Junius W. Schmidt, also completed the Queens Borough Public Library's central building in 1927.

Schirmer was well known in Queens as an architect of fine upscale suburban homes. He was also a prolific church architect in the borough as well; his best-known work was St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in Woodhaven. He also designed charitable homes for the aged and blind in both Brooklyn and Queens and was the architect of several Masonic Lodges in Queens. He was a member of both the Washington DC and Brooklyn chapters of the American Institute of Architects.

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F. Associated Property Types

(Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)

Property Type

Carnegie Library of New York City

Description

The Carnegie gift was administered independently by the three library systems. Each system established its own architecture committee, hired its own architects, and created its own design program and vocabulary. At the same time, the programs operated in close consultation, with the Brooklyn and Queens organizations deferring in large part to the example set by the NYPL. Above all there was a desire that the libraries “ought to be of one distinctive and uniform type” (per the NYPL) and that there be “unity of general type and character...without the sacrifice of that individuality which gives interest to a design” (according to the BPL committee). This tension between uniformity and individuality is perhaps the key architectural signifier of the Carnegie Libraries of New York City.

The clear unifying element was the Neoclassical style of architecture—and specifically the Beaux Arts substyle for which many of the library architects were nationally renowned. Applying this Neoclassical style to public buildings, these architects were following the tenets of the City Beautiful movement, which sought to express high-minded civic ideals through monumental architecture. Common to nearly all of the Carnegie Libraries of New York City are Classical details, including columns and pilasters, pedimented entrances and windows, and modillioned or bracketed cornices.

Individuality was achieved largely through site planning and the use of different materials between the various library systems (and between boroughs in the case of the NYPL). The Manhattan branches of the NYPL are mostly of the “urban” variety, occupying narrower mid-block sites and typically rising three stories. Many were three bays wide, although this could range from one to five bays depending on the site and architect. Most had limestone fronts. Notable exceptions include the Hudson Park Branch at two stories with a brick facade and limestone trim; the three-story Rivington and Seward Park Branches with brick facades and limestone trim; and the Washington Heights Branch with a brick facade and occupying a corner site similar to its Bronx contemporaries.

The Bronx branches of the NYPL are urban in character, too, while also reflecting the lower density of that borough. Many were sited on corner lots and were two stories in height, five bays wide, with red brick facades and limestone trim. The Woodstock Branch followed the Manhattan model, with a full limestone facade three bays wide and three stories tall. The Kingsbridge Branch resembled the more rural Staten Island models at one story with a symmetrical brick facade.

The Staten Island branches of the NYPL, all designed by Carrere & Hastings, are the most cohesive collection of any borough (and also the smallest, with only four buildings). They are all one story in height (St. George, intended to be the borough’s central library, responded to its topography and is two stories along its north and west elevations). All are clad in red brick with limestone trim.

The Brooklyn branches of the BPL were perhaps the most innovative in terms of site planning. Many occupy corner or irregular lots (notably the Williamsburgh Branch, considered the first Carnegie Library commenced in the borough). Most are one or two stories tall, with red brick facades and limestone trim.

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The Queens branches of the QPL are all of a more suburban type, one story tall, occupying a corner lot or larger park-like setting. Many of the surviving examples are clad in orange brick with limestone trim, although red brick was also used.

The interiors of the Carnegie libraries were typically less ornate than the exteriors. Finishes were economical, consisting of plaster walls and ceilings, simple wood trim such as baseboards and wainscoting, and minimal Classical decoration including columns and pilasters. More important were the quality and arrangement of the rooms. The architectural committees consulted with professional librarians in developing their plans, which were a definite departure from their 19th century predecessors. Many of the spaces, especially the reading rooms, had high ceilings and tall windows to maximize daylight. The librarian's desk was usually placed at the center of the building where attendants could monitor the reading rooms and have quick access to the stacks (which were designed for maximum accessibility).¹¹⁷

The layout of nearly all the suburban-type libraries (in Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and much of the Bronx) followed the standard plan for Carnegie libraries throughout the country: symmetrically arranged with a central entrance; a central hall with large circulation desk; and flanking reading rooms. Several of the Brooklyn libraries embellished this general scheme with innovations such as the octagonal hall and round stacks of the Williamsburgh Branch.

The plan of the urban-type libraries in Manhattan and some in the Bronx was notably different. These buildings were multi-story with an entrance set to one side. The entrance usually led to a vestibule with a short flight of stairs leading to a hallway along the side of the building. The circulation desk was near the center of the building opposite the hallway. Reading rooms were placed along the front and rear facades to maximize reading light, while the stacks were in the center of the building adjacent to the circulation desk.

Significance

Criterion A: The Carnegie Libraries of New York City represent a significant advancement in public education by greatly improving access to reading material. Circulation numbers for the three systems soared as new branches were completed. By 1913, for example, the NYPL reported 8 million volumes borrowed, the highest in the world. One admirer of the New York's libraries extolled "the extent to which books are distributed among the people, the number of new readers enrolled, the speed with which the demand for any book is met, the number of books issued to be read at home, the number of children attracted to reading and the use of the library."¹¹⁸ The Carnegie program also helped transform libraries from private—and very often tightly restricted—organizations into true public institutions supported by the people and accessible to everyone. Perhaps the defining feature of Carnegie's library philanthropy was the requirement that local municipalities take ownership of these newly created institutions. His grant to New York City coincided with, and in fact propelled, the creation of the city's three public branch library systems still in existence today. To be eligible under Criterion A in the area of public education, a branch must have well-documented and demonstrable educational programs or association with a specific educational emphasis or effort.

Criterion C: New York City's Carnegie Libraries comprise a cohesive collection of public buildings, nearly all designed in the monumental Beaux Arts style favored by the City Beautiful movement in the early 20th century. The close collaboration within (and between) the architecture committees ensured a uniformity of design such that everyone would be able to recognize the Carnegie library as a distinct building type, while also allowing

¹¹⁷ Dierickx speculates that "It is probable that Andrew Carnegie influenced this procedure; it was in accordance with his strong belief in the trained, professional librarian and in economical and efficient library buildings and plans." Dierickx, 35.

¹¹⁸ Vladimir Lenin, writing in 1913 during his exile in Europe before the Russian Revolution. Wallace, 382.

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ample freedom of expression to the individual designer. The architects who served on these committees were well regarded locally, and several were nationally known, helping to popularize both the Beaux Arts style and the City Beautiful movement to which the Carnegie libraries closely adhered. Designed by prominent architects with guidance from the philanthropist himself, the Carnegie Libraries of New York City in many ways served as models for other municipalities and helped define the form of public libraries in United States during the early 20th century. Carnegie Libraries are also significant under Criterion C as examples of a distinctive library building type characterized by their monumental design, central reading hall with large circulation desk, reading rooms, high ceilings, and tall windows to maximize light.

Registration Requirements

To be eligible for listing as part of the Carnegie Libraries of New York City multiple property submission, a property must retain the following features:

- It must be recognized as a Carnegie Library of New York City and located within the municipal boundaries of the city of New York.
- Funding for its construction must have come—in whole or in part—through Andrew Carnegie's 1901 gift of \$5.2 million to the city for library buildings. These funds were administered in their respective territories by the Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library, and Queens Borough Public Library, the library must have been built for one of these institutions.
- It must be built during the period 1901-29.
- It must retain most of its original exterior appearance, especially those elements that mark the properties as public libraries. For most of the Carnegie libraries, this means the property should retain the major stylistic characteristics of a Neoclassical, Beaux-Arts, or other style popular during the City Beautiful era. These characteristics include: monumental masonry facades, grand classical ornament, prominent entrances, and large fenestration. All of the Carnegie libraries in New York City have masonry facades; the application of non-historic siding, such as vinyl or stucco, would disqualify the building for listing under this MPDF. Original windows, doors, lanterns, and other easily replaceable elements contribute to the identity of these buildings but the loss of these elements alone will not make the building ineligible. Window changes alone will not necessarily disqualify a building if the original openings are visible and restorable; replacement windows should match the original sash configuration and/or fill the original opening. Changes for maintenance, such as new roofs or gutters, will not affect eligibility.
- Additions to libraries are common and reflect their continued use and neighborhood development over time; therefore, additions do not disqualify properties if the addition was constructed using Carnegie funds and/or the addition is compatible in scale and materials and is clearly secondary to the main library.
- Substantial modifications to the design and massing of the original library building, such as a loss of a floor or a later redesign, must be considered in the context of the entire building. The loss of one floor may be overcome if the remaining building retains a high degree of integrity, but the loss of multiple floors is a major alteration that would disqualify the building for listing. Similarly, a library with an early twentieth century façade redesign could still be eligible for listing if it largely retained its original massing and fenestration and had an intact interior reflecting the Carnegie library building type. A Carnegie library with a comprehensive redesign of the exterior and interior would not be eligible for listing under this MPDF.
- Its interior, especially its plan, must still be recognizable as a public library. Since the materials and ornament of the interiors was usually modest, the size, proportion, and arrangement of the rooms were the true innovation of the Carnegie libraries. Characteristic spaces that mark a building as a Carnegie library include: centralized circulation area; flanking reading rooms with tall ceilings and large windows allowing ample reading light; and a room dedicated to the open stacks. Replacement of furniture,

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including the original central desk, finishes, and fixtures are expected and will not disqualify a property if it largely retains integrity of plan and open spaces characteristic of Carnegie library interiors. Interior modifications that are a result of a library's adaptation to new technology, such as computers, and recognition of social issues, such as providing equal access, only enhances a library's ability to serve the public and will not affect eligibility.

- It is not required that eligible buildings remain in use as a library so long as their essential architectural character as a Carnegie Library, as defined by the exterior and interior requirements for integrity in this section, remains largely intact.

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G. Geographical Data

This Multiple Property Submission encompasses the municipal boundary of the City of New York.

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

(Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)

The definitive inventory of the Carnegie Libraries of New York City was compiled by Mary B. Dierickx in *The Architecture of Literacy: The Carnegie Libraries of New York City*, published in 1996. The Carnegie gift to New York City, administered in parallel by the three library systems, was extensively documented from the beginning. The selection of sites, hiring of architects, the awarding of building contracts, and even the of furnishing of interior spaces was avidly reported by the contemporary press and recorded by the libraries themselves. Most written histories of each library system in fact contains extensive discussion of the Carnegie program, typically accompanied by a comprehensive list of Carnegie-funded buildings.¹¹⁹ Because of this wealth of documentation, there is a near-universally accepted canon of Carnegie Libraries of New York City comprising the 67 properties listed in Appendix A.

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(List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)

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¹¹⁹ Lydenberg's history of the NYPL, for example, contains a complete inventory of that system's Carnegie libraries built to that point (it was written in 1923 while the program was still active). This list is numbered to 42, although only 37 branches are recorded; the final two, the Fordham and Hunt's Point branches were completed after its publication. Lydenberg, 544-45.

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Appendix A

Inventory of the Carnegie Libraries of New York City

System	Borough	Libraries Built	Libraries Extant
NYPL	MN, BX, SI	39	33
	<i>Manhattan</i>	26	21
	<i>Bronx</i>	9	8
	<i>Staten Island</i>	4	4
BPL	Brooklyn	21	18
QPL	Queens	7	4
All	All	67	56

New York Public Library, Manhattan

Branch Name	Address	Architect	Date Opened	Status
115th Street Branch	203 West 115th Street	McKim, Mead & White	11/6/1908	Extant
125th Street Branch	224 East 125th Street	McKim, Mead & White	3/7/1904	Extant
135th Street Branch	103 West 135th Street	McKim, Mead & White	7/14/1905	Extant
58th Street Branch	121 East 58th Street	Babb, Cook & Willard	5/10/1907	Demolished
67th Street Branch	328 East 67th Street	Babb, Cook & Willard	1/20/1905	Extant
96th Street Branch	112 East 96th Street	Babb, Cook & Willard	9/22/1905	Extant
Aguilar Branch	174 East 110th Street	Herts & Tallant	11/29/1905	Extant
Chatham Square Branch	33 East Broadway	McKim, Mead & White	11/2/1903	Extant
Columbus Branch	742 Tenth Avenue	Babb, Cook & Willard	9/24/1909	Extant
Epiphany Branch	228 East 23rd Street	Carrère & Hastings	9/20/1907	Extant
Fort Washington Branch	535 West 179th Street	Cook & Welch	4/14/1914	Extant
Hamilton Fish Park Branch	388 East Houston Street	Carrère & Hastings	9/12/1909	Demolished
Hamilton Grange Branch	503 West 145th Street	McKim, Mead & White	1/8/1907	Extant
Harlem Branch	9 West 124th Street	McKim, Mead & White	1/11/1909	Extant
Hudson Park Branch	66 Leroy Street	Carrère & Hastings	1/24/1906	Extant
Muhlenberg Branch	209 West 23rd Street	Carrère & Hastings	2/19/1906	Extant
Riverside Branch	190 Amsterdam Avenue	Carrère & Hastings	2/16/1905	Demolished
Rivington Branch	61 Rivington Street	McKim, Mead & White	6/10/1905	Extant, no longer library
Seward Park Branch	192 East Broadway	Babb, Cook & Welch	11/11/1909	Extant
St. Agnes Branch	444 Amsterdam Avenue	Babb, Cook & Willard	3/26/1906	Extant
St. Gabriel's Park Branch	303 East 36th Street	McKim, Mead & White	5/15/1908	Demolished
Tompkins Square Branch	331 East 10th Street	McKim, Mead & White	12/1/1904	Extant
Washington Heights Branch	1000 St. Nicholas Avenue	Carrère & Hastings	2/26/1914	Extant
Webster Branch	1465 York Avenue	Babb, Cook & Willard	10/24/1906	Extant
West 40th Street Branch	457 West 40th Street	Cook & Welch	10/20/1913	Demolished

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Carnegie Libraries of New York City
Name of Multiple Property Listing

New York
State

Yorkville Branch	222 East 79th Street	James Brown Lord	12/13/1902	Extant
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New York Public Library, Bronx

Branch Name	Address	Architect	Date Opened	Status
Fordham Branch	2556 Bainbridge Avenue	McKim, Mead & White	9/22/1923	Extant, no longer library
High Bridge Branch	78 West 168th Street	Carrère & Hastings	7/22/1908	Demolished
Hunts Point Branch	877 Southern Boulevard	Carrère & Hastings	7/1/1929	Extant
Kingsbridge Branch	3041 Kingsbridge Avenue	McKim, Mead & White	5/19/1905	Extant, no longer library
Melrose Branch	910 Morris Avenue	Carrère & Hastings	1/14/1914	Extant
Morrisania Branch	610 East 169th Street	Babb, Cook & Willard	12/1/1908	Extant
Mott Haven Branch	321 East 140th Street	Babb, Cook & Willard	3/31/1905	Extant
Tremont Branch	1866 Washington Avenue	Carrère & Hastings	7/22/1905	Extant
Woodstock Branch	761 East 160th Street	McKim, Mead & White	2/17/1914	Extant

New York Public Library, Staten Island

Branch Name	Address	Architect	Date Opened	Status
Port Richmond Branch	75 Bennett Street	Carrère & Hastings	3/18/1905	Extant
St. George Branch	10 Central Avenue	Carrère & Hastings	6/26/1907	Extant
Stapleton Branch	132 Canal Street	Carrère & Hastings	6/17/1907	Extant
Tottenville Branch	7430 Amboy Road	Carrère & Hastings	11/26/1904	Extant

Brooklyn Public Library

Branch Name	Address	Architect	Date Opened	Status
Arlington Branch	203 Arlington Avenue	Richard A. Walker (Walker & Morris)	11/7/1906	Extant
Bedford Branch	496 Franklin Avenue	Lord & Hewlett	2/4/1905	Extant
Brownsville Branch	61 Glenmore Avenue	Lord & Hewlett	12/19/1908	Extant
Bushwick Branch	340 Bushwick Avenue	Raymond F. Almirall	12/16/1908	Extant
Carroll Gardens Branch	396 Clinton Street	William B. Tubby	3/3/1905	Extant
DeKalb Branch	790 Bushwick Avenue	William B. Tubby	2/11/1905	Extant
Eastern Parkway Branch	1044 Eastern Parkway	Raymond F. Almirall	7/7/1914	Extant
Flatbush Branch	22 Linden Boulevard	Rudolph L. Daus	10/7/1905	Extant
Fort Hamilton Branch	9424 4th Avenue	Lord & Hewlett	10/7/1905	Extant
Greenpoint Branch	107 Norman Avenue	Rudolph L. Daus	4/7/1906	Demolished
Leonard Branch	81 Devoe Street	William B. Tubby	12/1/1908	Extant
Macon Branch	361 Lewis Avenue	Richard A. Walker (Walker & Morris)	7/15/1907	Extant
Pacific Branch	25 4th Avenue	Raymond F. Almirall	10/8/1903	Extant
Park Slope Branch	431 6th Avenue	Raymond F. Almirall	7/30/1906	Extant

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Carnegie Libraries of New York City
Name of Multiple Property Listing

New York
State

Red Hook Branch	Richards Street and Visitation Place	Richard A. Walker	4/22/1915	Demolished
Saratoga Branch	8 Thomas S. Boyland Street	Rudolph L. Daus (Daus & Otto)	9/3/1908	Extant
South Branch	5108 4th Avenue	Lord & Hewlett	12/9/1905	Demolished
Stone Avenue Branch	581 Mother Gaston Boulevard	William B. Tubby	9/24/1914	Extant
Walt Whitman Branch	93 St. Edwards Street	Rudolph L. Daus (Daus & Otto)	9/1/1908	Extant
Washington Irving Branch	360 Irving Avenue	Edward L. Tilton	5/16/1923	Extant
Williamsburgh Branch	240 Division Avenue	Richard A. Walker (Walker & Morris)	1/28/1905	Extant

Queens Public Library

Branch Name	Address	Architect	Date Opened	Status
Astoria Branch	14-01 Astoria Boulevard	Tuthill & Higgins	11/19/1904	Extant
Elmhurst Branch	86-01 Broadway	Lord & Hewlett	3/31/1906	Demolished
Far Rockaway Branch	1637 Central Avenue	Lord & Hewlett	8/18/1904	Demolished
Flushing Branch	41-25 Main Street	Lord & Hewlett	12/17/1906	Demolished
Poppenhusen Branch	121-23 14th Avenue	Heins & LaFarge	10/5/1904	Extant
Richmond Hill Branch	118-14 Hillside Avenue	Tuthill & Higgins	7/1/1905	Extant
Woodhaven Branch	85-41 Forest Parkway	Robert F. Schirmer	1/5/1924	Extant