

**NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM ON CD (MS WORD FORMAT)

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE (must comply with a Board of Revision of Taxes address)

Street address: 3948-50 Walnut Street

Postal code: 19104-3609

Councilmanic District: 3

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: West Philadelphia Branch, Free Library of Philadelphia

Common Name: Walnut Street West Library (Free Library of Philadelphia)

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Building

Structure

Site

Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: excellent good fair poor ruins

Occupancy: occupied vacant under construction unknown

Current use: Branch Library, Free Library of Philadelphia

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION *SEE ATTACHED.*

6. DESCRIPTION *SEE ATTACHED.*

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Period of Significance (from year to year): 1895-1959

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1905-1906 (*branch library construction*); 1959-1960 (*facility modernization, gutted interior, reorientation of main entrance*); 2001 (*restoration, entrance reorientation reversed*)

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Zantzinger, Clarence C. (*principal architect*); Borie, Charles Louis Jr. (*architect*); Martin, Stewart, & Noble (*1959-60 architects*); Buell Kratzer & Powell (*2001 restoration architects*)

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Doherty, William R. (*contractor*)

Original owner: Free Library of Philadelphia

Other significant persons: Carnegie, Andrew; Clark, Clarence H.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES *SEE ATTACHED*

9. NOMINATOR

Name with Title: Samantha Kuntz, PCPC Intern

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c/o Martine Decamp, PCPC Community Planner

martine.decamp@phila.gov

Organization: Philadelphia City Planning Commission

Date: December 2014

Street Address: 1515 Arch Street, Floor 13

Telephone: (215) 683-4631

City, State, and Postal Code: Philadelphia, PA 19102

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: _____

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: _____

Date of Notice Issuance: _____

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Postal Code: _____

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: _____

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

Designated Rejected

3/16/07

5. Boundary Description

The West Philadelphia Branch of the Free Library is located on the southeast corner of South 40th and Walnut Streets (*Fig. 1.1-1.2*), situated at the western edge of William Hamilton’s historic family estate and the subsequent early 19th century Hamilton Village subdivision (*Fig. 2*). The property boundary of the library branch begins at a point at the southeast corner of South 40th and Walnut Streets, then extends 133 feet along South 40th Street to a point, then extends east 50 feet along a line parallel to Walnut Street, then extends 133 feet north towards Walnut Street to a point, then extends west along Walnut Street to the point of beginning (*Figs. 3.1-3.3*).

6. Description

OVERVIEW

As both the fifth public library branch and first Carnegie Library branch built in Philadelphia, the West Philadelphia branch building also holds the distinction of being the only Carnegie library made of terra cotta facing and in the Renaissance Revival style. Occupying nearly 6,650 square feet of land donated for this purpose by Philadelphia banker Clarence Clark, the two-story structure was designed by architect Clarence C. Zantzinger to evoke a sense of civic monumentalism within the confines of an urban residential land parcel. The building rises up from a gray granite base, composed of glazed terra cotta in lieu of white ashlar blocks. From its primary elevation on South 40th Street¹ to its frontage on Walnut Street, the library branch exhibits demure elements of the Renaissance Revival architecture, including symmetrically-balanced features and an originally flat roof (*Fig. 5.1*). More ornamentation was afforded to a dentiled cornice, library-book themed frieze, and balustrade along the roof line (*Figs. 5.2-4*). However, contemporary de-densification of the surrounding block to extend the University of Pennsylvania’s campus has uncovered deliberate gaps in the revival design by exposing the bare white stucco elevations that were, at one point, hidden by adjacent buildings (*Fig. 5.5*).

PRIMARY ELEVATION | WEST FAÇADE

¹ **N.B.** Though the building’s main entrance today faces out onto South 40th Street in accordance with architect Clark C. Zantzinger’s original layout, the northern façade along Walnut Street was reconstructed as the main entrance after mid-century renovations sought to modernize the historic branch library. However, 21st century restorations have since reestablished the primary entrance on the western façade along South 40th Street (*Fig. 4*).

Designed as the main library entrance in 1905, the west façade fronting South 40th Street serves today as the primary elevation (*Fig. 6.1*). It is comprised of five bays, the central of which encompasses the main entrance. The door itself is contained within a low archway located directly underneath an ornamental cartouche and a set of comparatively small windows (*Fig. 6.2*). The remaining bays – separated from the main entrance by nondescript pilasters – contain four additional tripartite windows elevated above the height of the entranceway which define the primary elevation. Four round-arch basement windows (filled in with stone during contemporary renovations) are located beneath each bay, creating an expanse of space that facilitated the efficient use of uninterrupted interior wall space for library shelving (*Fig. 6.3*).²

The two plaques flanking the entranceway pay homage to Andrew Carnegie and Clarence H. Clark, commemorating the two men whose philanthropic efforts enabled the construction of the West Philadelphia branch at this site (*Figs. 6.4-5*).

SECONDARY ELEVATIONS

The highly stylized skin of the primary elevation is continued onto the north façade, which has borne the most substantial exterior changes over the years (*Fig. 7.1*). While the building's façades have largely been spared the modifications done to the interior, the northern elevation on Walnut Street has undergone two distinct alterations since 1905. When built originally, the north façade was a narrower translation of the primary entrance on South 40th Street, with two dominant bays each consisting of two tripartite windows and a staircase leading to a basement entrance at the corner of 40th and Walnut Streets. It was stripped of this architectural language, however, in favor a more modern frontage for Walnut Street in 1959-1960. The two terra cotta bays were replaced by large plate glass panels that supported a new, modern entranceway that rendered the original western entry extraneous. The isolated application of modern design elements on the northern elevation was reworked in 2001, when the modern entranceway was covered by a two-story bay window of matching terra cotta protruding out from the remnants of the 1905 façade (*Fig. 7.2*).

The southern and eastern elevations are intentionally devoid of any ornamentation, due to the early twentieth century arrangement of surrounding buildings (*Figs. 7.3-4*). Returns appear on both the south and east façades at the points where they meet the west and north façades; however, apart from that detail, the walls are simple white stucco (*Fig. 7.5*).

² Lisa P. Davidson and Catherine C. Lavoie, HABS No. PA-6765, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2007), 11.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

OVERVIEW

The West Philadelphia Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia meets Criteria for Designation A, D, E, H and J: The property:

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past;
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community;
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; and
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation.

West Philadelphia Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia is perhaps most distinguished as the first of thirty Carnegie library endowments built in Philadelphia, though the branch library also speaks to three distinct movements of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries that shaped the growth the city, as well as cities across the nation.³ Carnegie's endowments, though unparalleled in scope, reflected the well-established institution of *philanthropy* in Philadelphia at this time. Wealthy Philadelphian merchants and businessmen – including Stephen Girard and William Wagner – had already begun crafting a legacy of philanthropic acts that turned portions of their privately earned fortunes into schools and foundations for public benefit by the time the West Philadelphia Branch of the library opened in 1906. However, Carnegie was at the forefront of a burgeoning philanthropic movement whereby the industry titans of the age established charitable foundations for public welfare that eclipsed existing local efforts. The Carnegie Fund of 1886 predated both the John D. Rockefeller Foundation (1913) and the Henry Ford Foundation (1936).

³ Davidson and Lavoie, 1. (N.B.: Though thirty were commissioned, only twenty-five were built due to what Davidson and Lavoie cite as “rising construction costs.” Today, twenty-one of those Carnegie libraries exist in various states of repair across Philadelphia.)

The library also speaks to the climate of *enlightenment* at the time, the movement which advocated for a more educated and refined public. Lecture halls, private libraries, scientific institutions flourished in the Victorian Era, with public library branches following in suit. The West Philadelphia branch, which was first established in 1895, took this enlightenment to a new level when Carnegie's grant enabled the satellite library to build a monument to its holdings. According to the Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey, "Enlightenment culture in its bright washable whiteness here is the image of this repository."⁴ It is, therefore, no coincidence that the building itself is a Renaissance Revival, protecting the core components of an enlightened public (*Fig. 8.1*).

Architectural associationalism in this sense carries over into the third and final movement, *civic reform*. The burgeoning City Beautiful Movement was just gaining momentum in Philadelphia when the West Philadelphia branch officially opened in 1906, with disciples of the *École des Beaux-Arts* designing a new civic landscape to promote urban reform. The branch library thus became an early application of City Beautiful philosophy, using highly-stylized architecture to create a civic presence for the betterment of society. The exercise proved advantageous for the library's main architects, Clarence C. Zantzinger and Charles Louis Borie, Jr., whose firm would later establish the epicenter of the City Beautiful Movement in Philadelphia by designing the Benjamin Franklin Parkway (1909) and the Philadelphia Museum of Art (1919) alongside notable architects such as Paul Philippe Cr  t, Horace Trumbauer, and Julian Abele.⁵

Although this particular branch reflects the philanthropic, neo-enlightenment, and civic reform movements of the time, the same might be said for any of Carnegie's two thousand libraries across the world. What makes any of these libraries unique are the idiosyncrasies; those variations in design, experience, and influence that carve out an alcove of independent significance within Carnegie's colossal legacy. The steel baron's presence at the West Philadelphia Branch only represents one distinct moment in the library's history. It is the events that transpired before the donation and those that have occurred since that truly define the West Philadelphia Branch as a historically important property, not only as a part of the whole of Carnegie's libraries, but as a local anchor of civic life in West Philadelphia (*Fig. 8.2*).

A PHILANTHROPIC LEGACY OF ANDREW CARNEGIE⁶

⁴ J. Cohen, PHRS No. 034-81140-03948, (Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1981), 3.

⁵ **N.B.** Zantzinger, Borie, and Cr  t designed the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in 1909, though it was not completed until 1917. The Philadelphia Museum of Art, designed by the Zantzinger, Borie, Medary (Milton B.), and Trumbauer's firm, with notable contributions from Abele and Shay (Howell Lewis), was designed in 1919 but completed in 1928.

⁶ "A Philanthropic Legacy of Andrew Carnegie" has been adapted from previous Carnegie library branch nominations in Philadelphia by John Gallery. It is included in this nomination with the expressed approval of the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia, 2013.

Carnegie's contribution to the heritage of the West Philadelphia branch, however, cannot be understated. Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) was a Scottish-born industrialist, businessman, and a major philanthropist during the Gilded Age, a time of vast industrial and population growth and a marked disparity between wealth and poverty. His family immigrated to the U.S. when he was 12, his father a victim of the rapid industrialization of Britain's textile industry. The family settled in Allegheny, a suburb of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

As an adult, Carnegie spent more than a decade with the Pennsylvania Railroad before leaving to manage the Keystone Bridge Company, which was replacing wooden bridges with iron ones. By the 1870s he was concentrating on steel manufacturing, ultimately creating the Carnegie Steel Company, which later merged with Elbert H. Gary's Federal Steel Company and several smaller companies to create U.S. Steel. In 1889, Carnegie wrote "The Gospel of Wealth" in which he proposed that wealthy men should live without extravagance and distribute their riches to benefit the welfare and happiness of the common man. His second essay, "The Best Fields for Philanthropy" recommended seven areas to which the wealthy should donate: universities, libraries, medical centers, public parks, meeting and concert halls, public baths, and churches. Many of the organizations he founded continue their good works to this day, including the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

During his youth, while working as a messenger boy for the telegraph office, Carnegie met Colonel James Anderson, who every Saturday would open his personal library to any young workers who wanted to borrow a book. Carnegie later said the colonel opened the windows through which the light of knowledge streamed and this generosity set an example Carnegie vowed to follow if given the opportunity and means. Carnegie believed with the proper tools and a good work ethic, anyone could be successful and libraries had the power to create an egalitarian society that favored hard work over social privilege. Hence public libraries, as a key to learning and socialization, became the focus of his charitable donations.

With his belief that the wealthy were obligated to give back to society, he set out to spend before his death the entire \$400 million dollars⁷ he received through the sale of Carnegie Steel Company. He provided \$40 million dollars for the construction of over 1,600 libraries throughout the United States (46 states built Carnegie libraries) during the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries (and about 400 more internationally). Certain cities applied for large grants for multiple libraries. The largest of these went to New York City to support the construction of 76 libraries, 56 of which remain in use as libraries

⁷ **N.B.:** \$400 million in 1904 Dollars. According to Consumer Price Index Estimations by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, Carnegie's philanthropic fund would amount to over \$10 billion in 2013 dollars. As such, the total Carnegie Library Grant Program bequeathed over \$1 billion, with Philadelphia receiving around \$38 million, in 2013 dollars.

today. His second largest grant—\$1.5 million— went to Philadelphia intended for construction of 30 libraries, followed by grants to Cleveland (15), Baltimore (14) and Cincinnati (10). These endowments would have a profound effect on the perception of library services as a civic responsibility as well as the development of professional library standards and the evolution of the building type.

Initially Carnegie provided no specifications for architects designing branch libraries funded by his grants. However, there are a few indications that an attempt was made by the Carnegie Fund Committee that implemented the library program to develop standard plans for the branch libraries. Among the most convincing is a reference in the minutes for 1904 to a solicitation made on the part of the Committee to the well-known Philadelphia architectural firm of Hewitt & Hewitt for a plan for an inexpensive library prototype:

Mr. Edmunds [of the Carnegie Committee] reported that he had obtained from Messrs. Stevens and Edmunds, who are both employed in the office of Messrs. Hewitt, a plan showing what kind of building could, in their judgment, be erected for \$30,000, the building to measure 60' x 40' and to be about 45' in height.⁸

The brief specifications outlined are for a building that is generally smaller and certainly less expensive than any of those actually built. After 1908 Carnegie's secretary, James Bertram, began requiring building plans to be submitted for review before grant approval. The change came in response to what Bertram viewed as a number of poorly laid out or overly ornate libraries built with Carnegie funds. In 1911, Bertram published his "Notes," a guide to appropriate library design, with an emphasis on functionality over aesthetics in keeping with the American Library Association's research and developments in progressive library planning.

CARNEGIE GRANT PROGRAM IN PHILADELPHIA⁹

In January 1903, Carnegie's secretary James Bertram responded to the Free Library of Philadelphia approving a grant of \$1.5 million to finance the construction of thirty branch libraries. The grant was made explicitly for the construction of public libraries and required as a condition of the grant that the City provide the land for the libraries and funds for their operations. Because of the unusual nature and size of the gift, an act of the State Legislature was required to enable the City to accept the gift. This was followed by an act of City Council in 1904 accepting the gift and its terms.

⁸ *Annual Reports of the Library Board*, (14 July 1904).

⁹ "Carnegie Grant Program" has been adapted from previous Carnegie library branch nominations in Philadelphia by John Gallery. It is included in this nomination with the expressed approval of the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia, 2013.

The libraries were built between 1905 and 1930, with the bulk of them constructed between 1905 and 1917. Due to rising costs only twenty-five libraries were built, with nineteen remaining today. The first Carnegie-funded branch library to be completed in Philadelphia was West Philadelphia; the cornerstone was laid in 1905 and the library opened in June 1906. The last, and the last of all Carnegie libraries built in the United States, was the Wyoming Branch, which opened in 1930.

The libraries were designed by a wide range of Philadelphia architects including such prominent architects as James Windrim, Albert Kelsey and Paul Crêt, Cope & Stewardson, Clarence C. Zantziger, Charles L. Borie, Jr., Watson & Huckel, founder of Philadelphia's T-Square Club Lindley Johnson, and more.

Despite the fact that Philadelphia figures quite prominently on the timeline of American library history, it had no purpose-built public libraries prior to the Carnegie endowment. Philadelphia had the nation's first private subscription library, known as the Library Company, founded in 1731. The American Library Association, now the oldest and largest library association in the world, was formed in Philadelphia in 1876. The Free Library was established in 1891 placing Philadelphia among the first American cities to institute a non-subscription public library system to provide educational material and services to a wider array of citizens, particularly the city's burgeoning immigrant population.¹⁰ As Library Board president J.G. Rosengarten stated in 1903, "Proprietary libraries have grown into valuable adjuncts to our other education institutions. None of them, however, serves the public as does the Free Library, providing good reading for our school children, for our industrious adult population, and for the city's useful employees, firemen, and telegraph operators."¹¹ This civic tradition continues today with the advent of new technologies, providing computer and internet access to those unable to afford it.

Prior to Carnegie funding, the city's fourteen branch libraries, each started by interested local communities, were dependent on old mansions, storefronts or back rooms of commercial buildings and civic institutions for space. As library board president J.G. Rosengarten pointed out, "The [Carnegie] gift gave welcome relief from the expenses of the rented rooms occupied by the branches and from much of the risk to which the collections were subjected in these temporary quarters."¹² Even the Central Branch of the Free Library was housed in existing buildings (including City Hall) prior to the completion of its permanent home in 1927.

¹⁰ Russell Frank Weigly ed., *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton Barra Foundation Book, 1982), 526. (**N.B.:** In the early part of the 20th century, Philadelphia's population experienced its largest numerical increase for any similar period before or since; the number of inhabitants grew by almost one third – from 1.293 million to 1.684 million.)

¹¹ Theodore Wesley Koch, *A Book of Carnegie Libraries*, (New York, NY: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1917), 85.

¹² *Ibid.*

THE WALNUT STREET WEST BRANCH¹³

The West Philadelphia first opened unaffiliated with the Free Library of Philadelphia 1895. Like other early public library satellites, the branch first operated from the building of an existing organization, The West Philadelphia Institute at 40th and Ludlow Streets. After merging with the Free Library of Philadelphia the following year, the branch expanded rapidly. It quickly outgrew its original allotted tenancy at the Institute; and by 1901 it was moved to a new rented space at the Hamilton School Building at 41st and Chestnut Streets. By 1903, the West Philadelphia Branch was regarded as the second largest Free Library branch (surpassed only by the Wagner Free Institute) with a collection of over 16.5 thousand volumes.¹⁴

It was in that same year that Carnegie formally offered \$1.5 million to the City of Philadelphia for the construction of branch libraries.¹⁵ The city accepted the offer in 1904 and established a Carnegie Fund Committee to supervise the allocation of grant funding. Due to the availability of land, the collaborative relationship with banker and land magnate Clarence H. Clark, the restrictions of operating out of a rented, shared space, and the reputed popularity of the branch, the West Philadelphia Branch Library was selected as one of the early Carnegie library projects in Philadelphia. Clark, who passed away just four months prior to the library's completion, deeded the land to the City of Philadelphia in March of 1904. By October of the same year architect Clarence C. Zantzinger and his partner, Charles L. Borie, had designed preliminary sketches for the new branch library, and William R. Doherty had submitted the winning bid as the building's contractor.¹⁶ The West Philadelphia Branch Library's team broke ground on April 26th, 1905 and the library opened one year – and \$80 thousand – later. It narrowly beat out three other local Carnegie libraries in development to win the distinction of the first Carnegie library in Philadelphia, opening on June 27th, 1906.¹⁷

A half century later, the West Philadelphia Branch experienced the first of two significant structural alterations. Pursuant to “a larger movement to modernize all of the Free Library's facilities, designed by the Philadelphia Department of Public Property, Architecture, and Engineering,” the library was redesigned by the local architecture firm Martin, Stewart, & Noble in 1959.¹⁸ The firm had previously

¹³ Additional nomination research for this section provided by Karen Miller, on behalf of the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia, 2013.

¹⁴ *Annual Report of the Library Board* (1902), 9.

¹⁵ “Steel Magnate Tenders Philadelphia \$1,500,000 to Build Branches,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, (7 January 1903), 1.

¹⁶ “Another Carnegie Library; Builders Have Plans for Branch in West Philadelphia,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (23 September 1904.)

¹⁷ **N.B.:** The Frankford, Lehigh Avenue, and Tacony Branches of the Free Library of Philadelphia were all slated to open in late 1906. Though \$10 thousand over budget, the West Philadelphia Branch wrapped construction in early June and became the first Carnegie Library in Philadelphia.

¹⁸ Davidson and Lavoie, 5.

designed the Bushrod Branch Library in 1950, “the first newly constructed branch in the Free Library system since the completion of the Central Library in 1927,” which demonstrated the firm’s penchant for mid-century modern design.¹⁹ As such, the West Philadelphia Branch’s interior was gutted, sacrificing Zantzinger and Borie’s architectural detail work for the sake of modernity (*Fig. 9.1*). On the exterior, only the northern façade on Walnut Street was touched; however, these changes considerably affected the expression of the original architectural language and articulation of space. The campaign to update the library removed the entire Walnut Street façade below the cornice, leaving only the roofline and the wide pilasters framing the elevation, and replaced the terra cotta with a plate glass entranceway meant to replace the historic entrance on South 40th Street (*Fig. 9.2*). By demoting the western elevation from entrance to side wall, Martin, Stewart, & Noble’s design designated the Walnut Street façade as the new, modern face of the library (*Fig. 9.3-9.4*). It was around the time of the reopening on February 8, 1960 that the West Philadelphia Branch came to be known as the Walnut Street West Branch, indicating the impact of the entranceway relocation.

Despite the mid-century endeavors to modernize the site, the branch library began to deteriorate toward the end of the twentieth century. After being closed from 1987 to 1990 for asbestos removal, the branch library faced an uncertain future in 1991 when University of Pennsylvania campus expansion plans threatened to demolish the Renaissance Revival and erect a 750-space parking garage in its stead. Although the institution offered to erect a new 6,500 square foot library branch elsewhere in the community, there existed “strong [community] sentiment to keep the library not only a library, but to keep it in that building.”²⁰ Even with the strong community opposition to the University’s plan, it was Clarence Clark himself who, in the end, provided the library’s greatest source of protection. In donating the land to the City for the construction of the branch library in 1904, he enacted a deed restriction which stipulated that Philadelphia must “return the parcel to heirs of Clarence Clark...if the property were no longer used as a library.”²¹ Clark’s gift, prompted by Carnegie’s \$1.5 million offer to the Board of Trustees of the Philadelphia Library, came with the condition that the land “shall be used only as a site for one of the thirty branch library buildings heretofore referred to and should such premises at any time hereafter cease to be used for such purpose then the land shall revert to and become the property of the said Clarence H. Clark his heirs.”²² This covenant, in addition to community resistance to the University’s development plans, successfully defeated plans to demolish the historic library.

¹⁹ Free Library of Philadelphia, “Bushrod Branch History,” (2014).

²⁰ David J. Wallace, “Philadelphia; Negotiating Land Swaps,” *The New York Times* (14 July 1991).

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² “Deed of Indenture: Clarence H. Clark to City of Philadelphia.” Deed book WSV no. 264 page 377-380, recorded 23 March 1904.

After severe flooding damage led to the discovery of structural instability and library's closure around 1996, the West Philadelphia Branch endured its final large-scale renovation to date. The library was slated to reopen in 1997 but cost to repair the damages proved too great for the Free Library of Philadelphia.²³ Faced once more with the library's permanent closure, the community led protests that led to the unveiling of a 2001 restoration plan. Helmed by Joseph Powell of the local firm Buell Kratzer and Powell, the library branch building was restored with "a number of significant changes that somewhat ironically resulting in the undoing of the previous 1959-60 changes."²⁴ Powell's restoration (notable for its status as the first LEED Silver project completed by the City of Philadelphia) replaced the glass front entrance on Walnut Street with a projecting two-story bay window that – while architecturally discordant – visibly compliments with the original aesthetic of the building.²⁵ With the mid-century modern entrance concealed, the original façade on South 40th Street was reinstated as the primary entrance. The \$2.6 million project repaired and preserved the remaining exterior; restored the 1906 skylight wells that had been covered by a drop ceiling in 1959 and reconstructed the boxed skylights in their place; and made significant changes to the interior (including the addition of a second floor) that erased the damage that "undermined both its decorative plasterwork and its structural stability" and protected the library from future threats.²⁶ The library reopened to the public in 2003.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

For over fifty years, the Renaissance Revival style dominated the intersection of Walnut and South 40th Streets prior to the emergence of alterations that would forever change the architectural meaning of the West Philadelphia Branch. The original design intent was evidenced in the branch library's smooth, symmetrically balanced façades; the classically styled balustrade along the roof line; the wide overhanging eaves with large dentils; and the arched and recessed entrance on South 40th Street. These features as a whole speak to the Second Renaissance Revival that swept the architectural profession at the turn of the twentieth century. While the Revival style was not uncommon at the time, both the library design and terra cotta composition are considered anomalies amongst the mass of the Free Library branches built in Philadelphia in the early twentieth century; although terra cotta was frequently used in late-nineteenth century buildings and revivals were common style choices for Carnegie libraries throughout the United States, Philadelphia's examples tended more toward Beaux Arts style architecture

²³ Stephanie Ramos, "Library Renovations Set to Begin; The Walnut West Branch, Located Near Campus, Will Reopen Next Year," *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, (30 May 2002).

²⁴ Davidson and Lavoie, 6.

²⁵ Buell Kratzer and Powell, "Walnut Street West Branch, Free Library of Philadelphia: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania," *Project Brief*.

²⁶ Davidson and Lavoie, 10.

with vernacular brick.²⁷ One likely and compelling reason might just be the architects' predilection for the philosophies of the City Beautiful movement, and the resounding associationalism of the revivalist style with civic aspirations for the library branch in West Philadelphia.

Clarence C. Zantzinger | A native Philadelphian with architectural training from the University of Pennsylvania and the *École des Beaux-Arts*²⁸, Clarence Zantzinger first submitted designs for the West Philadelphia Branch in the spring of 1904.²⁹ In the middle of his work on the Carnegie Library, Zantzinger joined with Charles Louis Borie, Jr. to form the offices of Zantzinger & Borie, which became the official firm that saw the library to fruition. His firm – which later included architect Milton B. Medary in 1910 – would become most notable for their work with Paul Philippe Crêt on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, starting in 1907, and the design of the Philadelphia Museum of Art from 1919 to 1928. By all accounts, Zantzinger maintained a strong working relationship with Crêt throughout their collaboration on the Parkway, and it has been noted that “his own students apart...Zantzinger probably enjoyed more of Crêt’s respect than any other Philadelphian.”³⁰

Charles Louis Borie, Jr. | Borie, another Philadelphia native trained in the family banking industry of C. and H. Borie, lacked formal architectural training; and yet, his partnership with Zantzinger proved longstanding and illustrious. After completing the Carnegie Library in 1906, Borie continued to work with Zantzinger on such projects as the Free Library of Philadelphia Ritner Childrens Branch on South Broad Street in 1913 and the Philadelphia Divinity School in 1919. Though much like Zantzinger, Borie truly left his architectural mark on the City of Philadelphia with the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in 1907. Zantzinger credited Borie for conceiving of the layout for civic buildings around the parkway, citing that it was Borie’s idea to elevate the yet-to-be-constructed Philadelphia Museum of Art at the end of the Parkway to create a focal point and civic anchor around which to arrange other buildings.³¹

Martin, Stewart & Noble | The West Philadelphia Branch’s mid-century renovation was undertaken between 1959 and 1960 by the firm of Martin, Stewart & Noble. Formed in 1954 and restructured in 1962 as Martin, Stewart, Noble & Class, the firm specialized in contemporary architecture and the modernization of existing resources. Examples of their work include the former Mercantile Library on

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Sandra L. Tatman, “Clarence C. Zantzinger (1872-1954),” from *American Architects and Buildings Database* (Philadelphia, PA: The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 2013). (**N.B.**: Zantzinger graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a Bachelor’s Degree in Architecture in 1895; he later completed his architectural education in 1901 after just two years at the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris.)

²⁹ Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee, *Minute Book*, Vol. 1, 1904.

³⁰ David L. Brownlee, *Building the City Beautiful: The Benjamin Franklin Parkway and the Philadelphia Museum of Art*, (Philadelphia, PA: The Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1989), 23.

³¹ *Ibid*, 24.

Chestnut Street in 1953, the West Oak Lane Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia in 1956, and Tandem Accelerator Laboratory at the University of Pennsylvania in 1961.

Buell Kratzer Powell | The most recent alteration, which reinstated the main entrance on the western elevation and converted Martin, Stewart & Noble's glass entrance on Walnut Street into a two-story bay window, was designed by Buell Kratzer Powell in 2001. The 1996 synthesis firm of Joseph Powell & Associates (1991) and Buell-Kratzer Architects (1995), Buell Kratzer Powell gained prominence as an environmentally conscious architecture firm with the West Philadelphia Branch restoration project, which was the first ever LEED-registered building project in Philadelphia. While the firm had already established a specialized niche in library architecture with the Evanston Public Library in Illinois in 1994, its library portfolio increased after the West Philadelphia Branch Library Restoration. They have since designed five more libraries, including the Widener Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia in 2006.

CONCLUSION

That the West Philadelphia Branch Library still exists in its 1906 structure despite previously outdated facilities and encroaching institutional development is a testament to the creativity of each round of architects, the foresight of its original landowner, and – most importantly – staunch support of the site from the community. That local residents sought not only to save the library, but to save the original structure for continued library use, speaks to the site's significance to the community. It serves as a community anchor in a part of Philadelphia often overwhelmed by the private educational development; but most significantly, it has become a dependable visual feature and public resource that can be relied upon in the face of an ever-changing landscape. With new interior updates elevating the library to twenty-first century standards and structural adaptations inside serving as preventative measures against future damages, the Renaissance Revival exterior poses no threat to the security of the site's future. The West Philadelphia Branch perpetuates architectural, social, and historical values in the community that, while often overlooked, should not be taken for granted.

8. Major Bibliographical References

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Mapping Figures

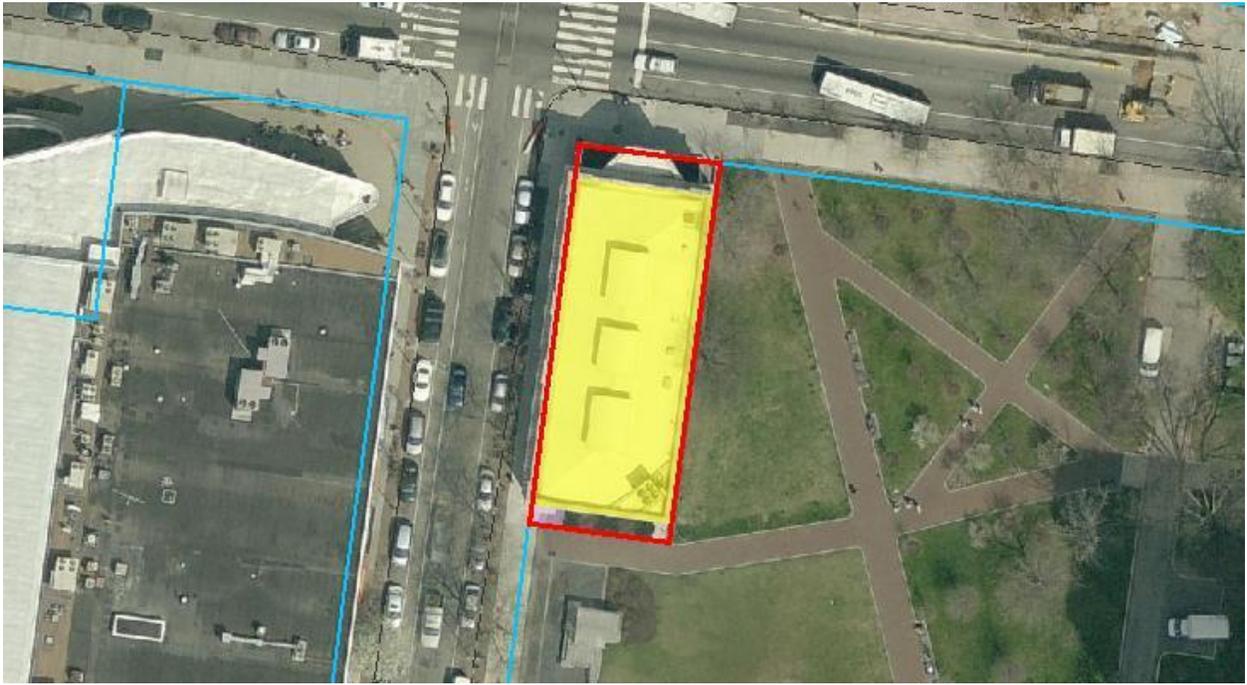
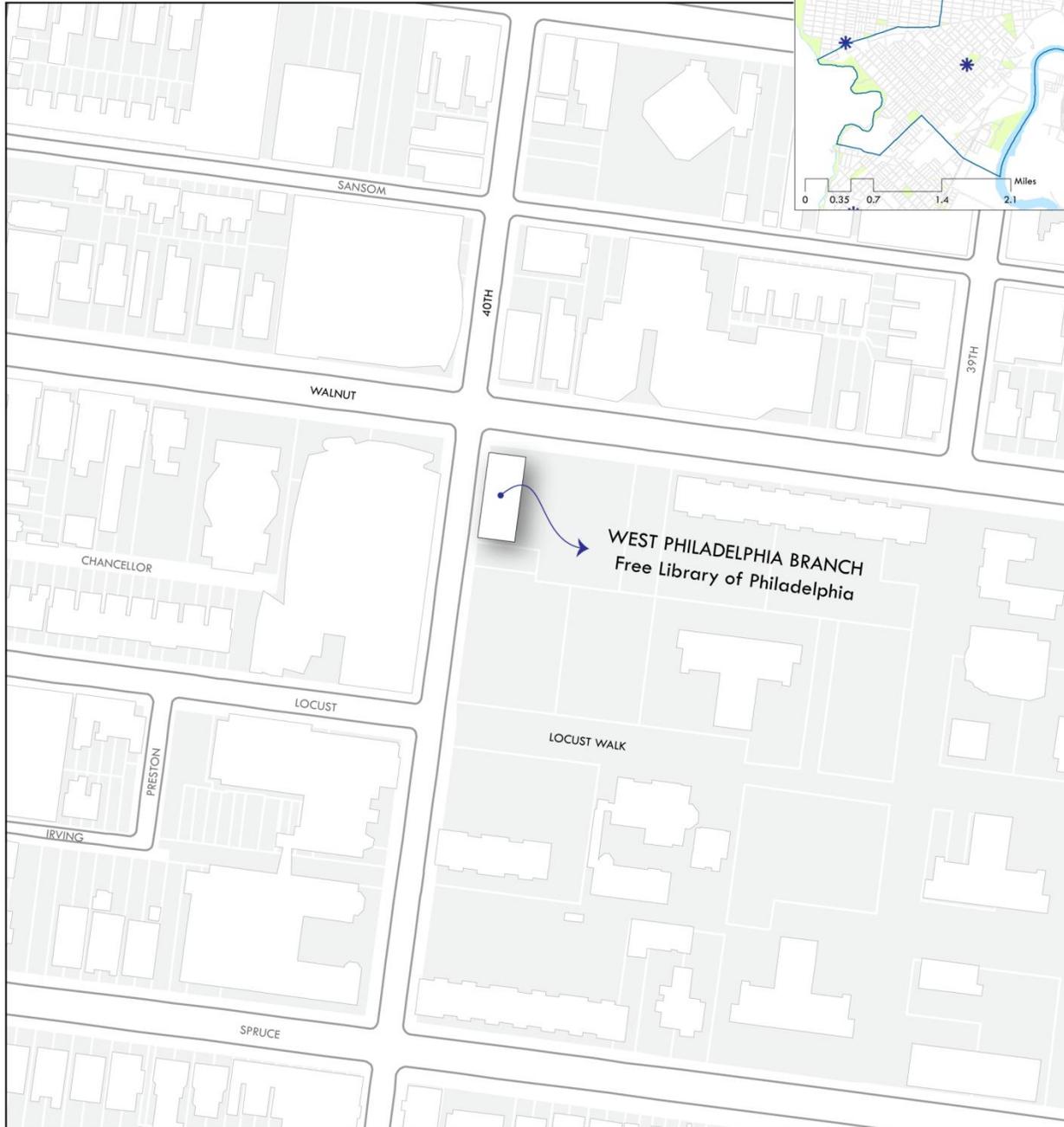


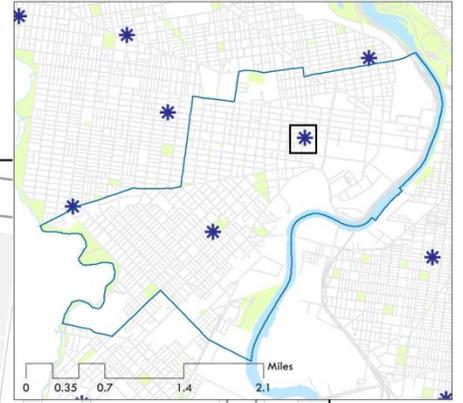
Figure 1.1 | Parcel Plan

Parcel plan courtesy of the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia, 2013.

SITE BOUNDARIES



CONTEXT MAP



 HISTORIC RESOURCE: West Philadelphia Branch Library

 Free Library of Philadelphia - Branch Libraries



University Southwest Boundaries

Figure 1.2 | Contemporary Site Plan



Figure 2 | Conceptualization of the historic location of the contemporary branch library, with the West Philadelphia Branch (graphically represented as the red star) superimposed on an 1808 view of Hamilton Village from *A Plan of the City of Philadelphia and Environs Surveyed by John Hills*.

Map courtesy of the Athenaeum of Philadelphia, Zeebooker Collection

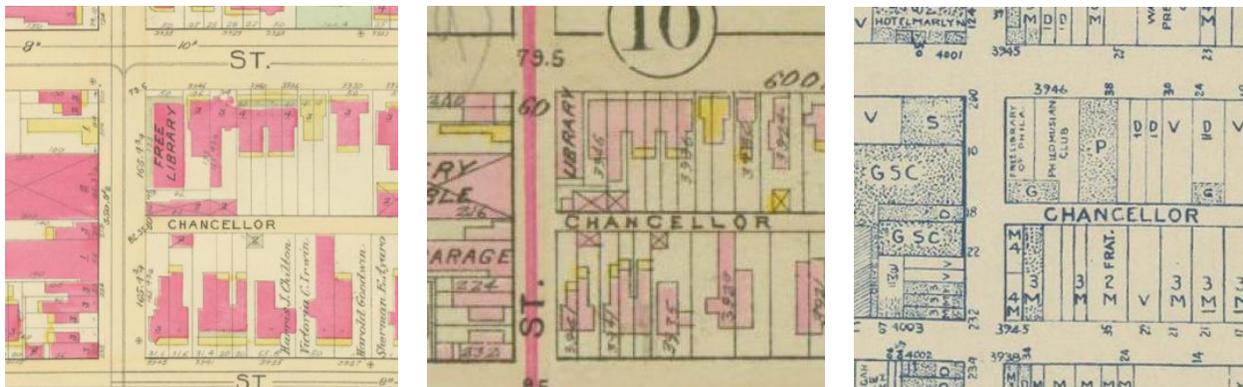


Figure 3.1 – 3.3 | Historic maps of the West Philadelphia Branch Library, including E.V. Smith's 1909 *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, 27th and 46th Wards* (left), G. W. Bromley's 1916 *Atlas of West Philadelphia* (center), and the Works Progress Administration's 1942 *Comprehensive Maps of Philadelphia Land Use*.

Maps courtesy of The West Philadelphia Community History Project, University of Pennsylvania Archives and the Free Library of Philadelphia, Map Collection.



Figure 4 | Contemporary map of the West Philadelphia Branch Library.

Map courtesy of Google, 2013.

Contemporary Image Index

All images courtesy of the author, 2013.



Figure 5.1 | The West Philadelphia Branch Library as it stands in 2013, with elements of its Renaissance Revival architecture still apparent despite years of alterations.



Figure 5.2-4 | Detailed views of the library (*clockwise from top*) the dentiled cornice; ornamental frieze; and balustrade along the roof line.



Figure 5.5 | Evidence of the stylistic gap, which was exposed by the demolition of surrounding buildings to create an extension of the University of Pennsylvania campus.



Figure 6.1 | West – and primary – façade.



Figure 6.2 | View of the west façade doorway.



Figure 6.3 | The impact of function on the design of the building is made apparent by exaggerated distance between windows on the western elevation.

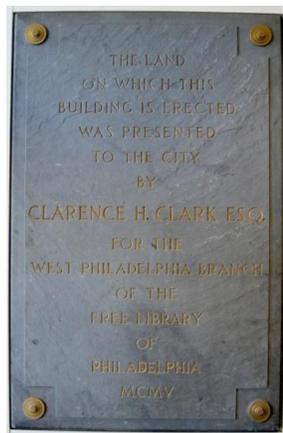


Figure 6.4-6.5 | Plaques honoring the library's most significant benefactors (*from left to right*): Andrew Carnegie and Clarence H. Clark.



Figure 7.1 | North façade.



Figure 7.2 | Application of the contemporary bay window against the original skin of the building.

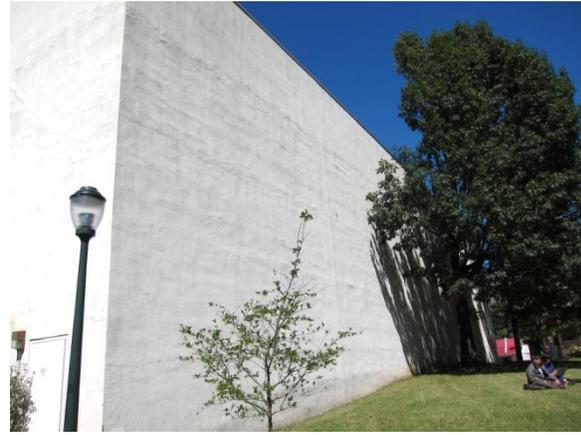


Figure 7.3-7.4 | Secondary elevations (*from left to right*): southern and eastern elevations.

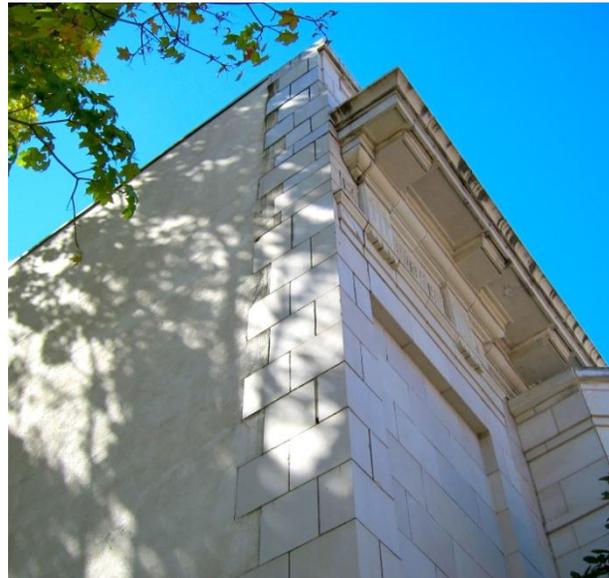


Figure 7.5 | Views of the building's returns (*from left to right*): return onto south and return onto east.

Historical Image Index

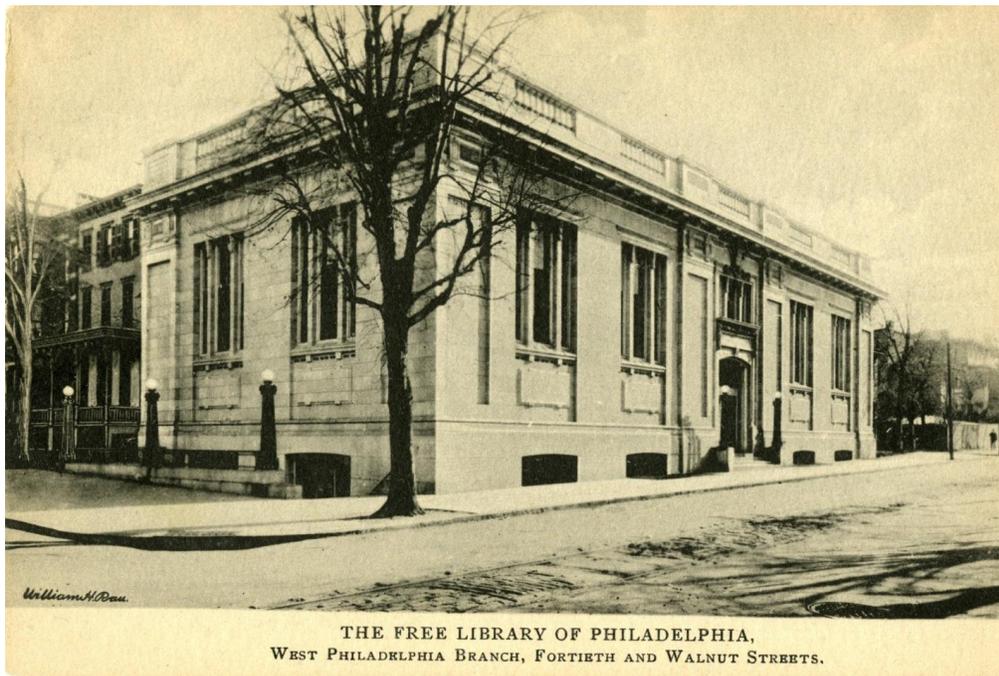


Figure 8.1 | Postcard of the branch library, with the original western entranceway, and the northern façade intact.

Postcard courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania Archives

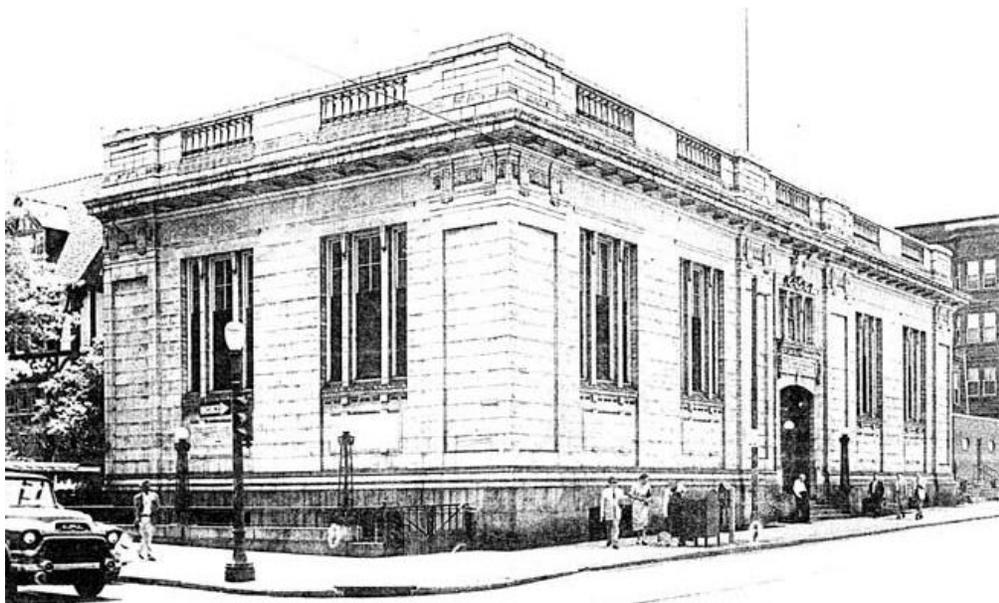


Figure 8.2 | Same perspective of the branch library in the postcard, seen here just prior to the 1959 renovation.

Image courtesy of Buell, Kratzer, Powell



Figure 9.1 | Interior of the library after modernization efforts by Martin, Stewart, & Noble.

Image courtesy of Buell, Kratzer, Powell

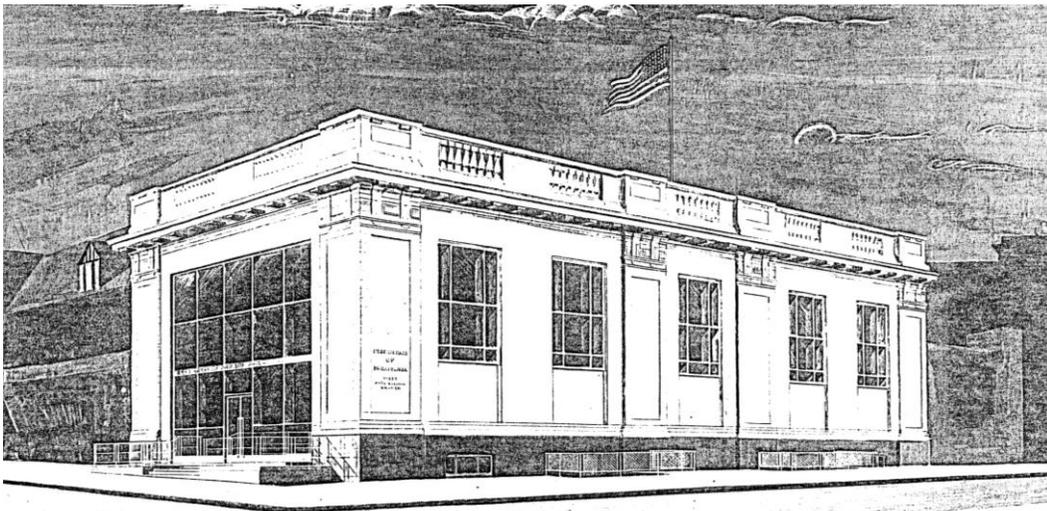


Figure 9.2 | Exterior rendering of the 1959 renovation, showing the new entrance on Walnut Street that led to its renaming as the Walnut Street West Branch.

Image courtesy of Buell, Kratzer, Powell



Figure 9.3 | View of the re-envisioned entrance prior to the restoration of the library in 2001 that replaced the glass front seen here with large bay windows and reinstated the entrance on South 40th Street.

Image courtesy of Buell, Kratzer, Powell



Figure 9.4 | Detail of exterior railing and glass entranceway on Walnut Street, prior to the restoration of the library in 2001. The stairs led to the raised entrance have since been replaced by planters.

Image courtesy of Buell, Kratzer, Powell