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)

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

Street address: **8711 Germantown Avenue**

Postal code: **19118** Councilmanic District: **8**

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2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **Chestnut Hill Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia**

Common Name:

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3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

☒ Building ☐ Structure ☐ Site ☐ Object

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4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: ☐ excellent ☒ good ☐ fair ☐ poor ☐ ruins

Occupancy: ☒ occupied ☐ vacant ☐ under construction ☐ unknown

Current use: Library

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5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

SEE ATTACHED

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6. DESCRIPTION

SEE ATTACHED

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7. SIGNIFICANCE

SEE ATTACHED

Period of Significance (from year to year): **1908-1930**

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: **1908**

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: **Cope and Stewardson**

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan:

Original owner: **City of Philadelphia**

Other significant persons: **Andrew Carnegie**

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: *Ben Leech, Director of Advocacy*

Email: *ben@preservationalliance.com*

Organization: *Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia*

Date: February 12, 2015

Street Address: *1608 Walnut Street, Suite 804*

Telephone: *215-546-1146*

City, State, and Postal Code: *Philadelphia, PA 19103*

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:_____

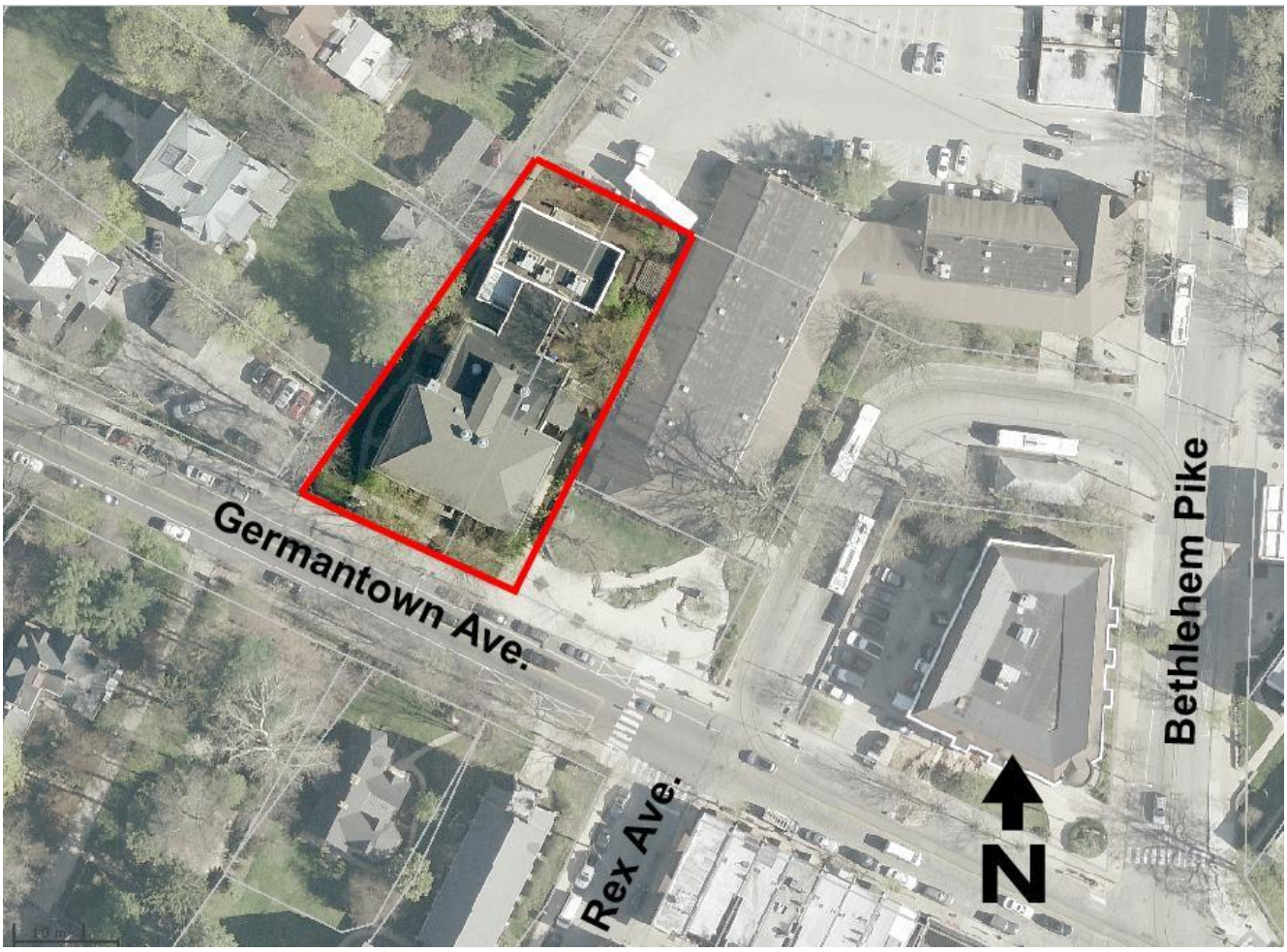
Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission:_____

Date of Final Action:_____

☐ Designated ☐ Rejected

Acknowledgements:

This nomination has been adapted from documentation of the Chestnut Hill Branch Library undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the Heritage Documentation Programs of the National Park Service, Richard O'Connor, Chief, during summer 2007 as part of a larger initiative to record the Carnegie funded branch libraries of the Free Library of Philadelphia. The project was sponsored by HABS in cooperation with the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, John A. Gallery, director; and the Free Library of Philadelphia, William J. Fleming, Administrative Services Director, and made possible through a Congressional appropriation for recording in Southeastern Pennsylvania. The historical reports were prepared by Lisa P. Davidson and Catherine C. Lavoie. Large-format photography was undertaken for HABS by Joseph Elliott. These materials are attached in whole as Appendix B. [Chestnut Hill Branch HABS No. PA-6750].



5: Boundary Description

The subject property occupies a single parcel registered by the Philadelphia Office of Property Assessment as 8711 Germantown Avenue, OPA Account #784167800. However, this parcel appears to be a consolidation of two plotted parcels: 8707 Germantown Avenue (128N09-0013) and 8711 Germantown Avenue (128N09-0011). The following boundaries are an approximation of the dimensions of the combined parcel:

Beginning at a point on Germantown Avenue 320 feet and 3 inches from the northwest corner of the intersection of Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike, then extending perpendicular to Germantown Avenue a depth of 196 feet and 6½ inches to a point, then extending northwest along a line parallel to Germantown Avenue 86 feet and 6½ inches to a point, then extending southwest 100 feet and ⅛ inch to a point on Germantown Avenue, then extending 118 feet and 5¾ inches along Germantown Avenue to the point of beginning.

Section 6: Description

The Chestnut Hill Branch of the Free Library is a one-story structure consisting of a tall main block fronting a series of shorter rear appendages. The building is oriented to and set back from Germantown Avenue on a mid-block parcel between Chestnut Hill Avenue and Bethlehem Pike in the Chestnut Hill neighborhood of Northwest Philadelphia. Its primary Germantown Avenue elevation faces southwest. The library was constructed in 1908 in a wide T-shaped plan with a hip-roofed main block and a lower, flat-roofed rear lecture room wing. In 1991, another series of rear appendages were added to the building. For the purposes of this nomination, these later additions are considered non-contributing alterations. The parcel features a landscaped front yard separated from the Germantown Avenue sidewalk by a low hairpin fence with cast iron fence post finials.

The original 1908 structure is clad in Wissahickon schist with limestone moldings. The main hip-roofed block is five bays wide and three bays deep, with each bay defined by a large round-arched window. These windows exhibit a Palladian motive, with a multi-light wood double-hung-sash window in the center flanked by wood double-hung-sash sidelights. This Palladian window ensemble sits recessed within the masonry opening and is supported by a wood window frame. The window masonry openings are detailed with a limestone ribbon that connects all exterior windows at the spring of the arch; each arch is decorated by a limestone keystone. The main block is capped by a wood cornice with dentils. An elongated hipped dormer extends from the rear roof pitch onto the flat-roofed rear wing.

The main entrance to the library is located on its southwest elevation, facing Germantown Avenue. It consists of an entrance vestibule that sits proud of the façade plane. This vestibule is centered on the façade, and accessible via six blue stone steps. The vestibule is articulated with engaged and paired Ionic half-columns, supporting an entablature capped by a balustrade; this classical composition is made of limestone. The entablature contains a plaque that reads “THE FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA, CHESTNUT HILL BRANCH.” The entry doors are double-leaf painted wood and glass.

The original rear lecture room wing features a projecting gable-roofed vestibule with secondary entrance on its southeast elevation. This entrance is recessed from the vestibule facade plane and features double-leaf painted wood and glass doors set below a fan-arch transom. An inscribed stone lintel reads “READING ROOM.” The northwest side of the lecture room wing features a pair of rectangular multi-light windows. An identical pair of windows on the northeast side of the wing flank the modern glass curtain hyphen connecting the historic library to the 1991 masonry addition.

Section 7: Statement of Significance

The Chestnut Hill branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia was one of twenty-five branch libraries constructed in the City of Philadelphia between 1904 and 1930 as a result of a $1.5 million grant from the Carnegie Corporation. Philadelphia was second only to New York City in the size of its Carnegie grant and number of branch libraries constructed. Prominent architects in each city designed the majority of the branches. The Chestnut Hill branch was the eighth Carnegie branch library built in Philadelphia. It was designed by the prominent local firm of Cope and Stewardson in the Colonial Revival style.

The Chestnut Hill Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia, located at 8711 Germantown Avenue possesses great significance for the City of Philadelphia, and meets the following Criteria for Designation as set forth in Section 14-10014 of the City of Philadelphia's Historic Preservation Ordinance. The building:

(a) Is associated with the development of the Free Library System in the City of Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh industrialist Andrew Carnegie.

(e) Serves as an example of the civic architecture of the renowned Philadelphia firm Cope & Stewardson.

Criterion 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 of importance in the past:

Andrew Carnegie's Library Program

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 he sold to J.P. Morgan who created 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, Carnegie met Colonel James Anderson, who every Saturday would open his personal library for any young worker 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 dollars 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 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.[1]

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 that building plans 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.

The Carnegie Grant in Philadelphia

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 30 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

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[1] *Annual Reports of the Library Board*, 14 July 1904.

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.

The libraries were built between 1905 and 1930, with the bulk of them constructed between 1905 and 1917. Due to rising costs only 25 libraries were built; of which 19 remain in operation as libraries 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 Cret, Cope & Stewardson, Clarence C. Zantziger, Charles Borie, 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.[2] 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."[3] 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."[4] 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.

The Germantown Branch of the Free Library

The suburban community of Chestnut Hill had a local library run by the Christian Hall Library Association of Chestnut Hill; local philanthropist Henry William built the Christian Hall Library in 1872. In 1876, library policy was changed to allow anyone to check out books without charge. In 1897 the trustees decided that the library should become a branch of the Free Library system.[5] In 1905 the Christian Hall Library Association offered the Free Library their library property as the location for a

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[2] 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 1.293million to 1.684 million. Russell Frank Weigly, Editor, *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History* (Barra Foundation Book, New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), 526

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

[4] Ibid.

[5] History of Chestnut Hill Branch on the Free Library website at http://libwww.freelibrary.org/branches/history.cfm?loc=CHH

new Carnegie-funded building.[6] The land was transferred to the city in March 1906. Plans were made to partially demolish the older building and continue library operations there until a portion of the Carnegie building could be completed.[7] The Chestnut Hill branch was under construction at the same time as branch libraries in Manayunk and Wissahickon. The branches in Germantown, Holmesburg, and Spring Garden were also completed during 1907.[8]

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* noted in December 1906 that a $50,000 Carnegie Library with a "spacious lecture room" would be built in Chestnut Hill.[9] By the end of the month, the contracts for Chestnut Hill Branch were awarded; J. S. Cornell and Son received the general contract for $30,129. Roberts Leinau received the heating and ventilating contract for $4,574; D'Olier Engineering would install the electric lighting for $1,570.[10] The records do not indicate the amount or source of a plumbing bid; perhaps in this instance it was included in the general contract. The rear ell portion of the library was built first, in order to avoid disrupting library service during construction. A cornerstone ceremony was held on September 13, 1907 when work began on the front section of the new library. Head librarian John Thomson gave a speech, as did James Jamieson as the library's designer. An article announcing the ceremony included a rendering of its main façade and a brief description of the structure:

> The building will be constructed of Chestnut Hill stone of the same color as that used in the old building. It will be one-story high with the library in front and the lecture room in the rear. The library room will measure 70 by 43 feet, and the lecture room 52 by 34 feet. The basement will contain boiler rooms, coal vaults, store rooms, lunch room, etc. The lecture room will be used as a children's room in the daytime.[11]

This description is consistent with the basic library design formula developed for the Carnegie-funded branch libraries and also confirms that the gray stone exterior was intended to follow regional architectural traditions. The official opening date was January 22, 1909, although this branch was functioning by mid-1908, with the total cost of construction ending up at $43,636.60.[12]

Criterion E: Is the work of a designer or architect whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation

The architects for the Chestnut Hill Branch, Cope and Stewardson, were one of Philadelphia's most prestigious firms at the turn of the century. The partnership was started sometime in 1885 by Walter Cope (1860-1902) and John Stewardson (1858-1896). Cope had been educated at Friends'

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[6] Free Library of Philadelphia, *Tenth Annual Report* (1905), 15.
[7] Free Library of Philadelphia, *Eleventh Annual Report* (1906), 23. The entire text of the land transfer agreement is included in Appendix D of this report.
[8] Free Library of Philadelphia, *Twelfth Annual Report* (1907).
[9] "Suburban Carnegie Library," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 16 December 1906, 8.
[10] Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee Meeting Minutes, (28 December 1906). See also announcement of contract in "The Latest News in Real Estate," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 29 December 1906.
[11] "New Library Home for Chestnut Hill," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 September 1907, 14. See also "Library Corner-stone," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 14 September 1907, 5.
[12] Free Library of Philadelphia, *Twelfth Annual Report* (1907), 20-21; Free Library of Philadelphia, *Thirteenth Annual Report* (1908), 21; Photograph of Chestnut Hill with cost figures on reverse in Director's Vault, Central Branch, Free Library of Philadelphia.

School in Germantown, through apprenticeships, and at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. He also conducted a study tour of England and France in 1884. Stewardson studied at Adams Academy in Quincy, Massachusetts, Harvard College, and the *Atelier Pascal* and *Ecole des Beaux Arts* in Paris. Upon returning to Philadelphia in 1882 he worked in the offices of T. P. Chandler and then Furness & Evans. Cope and Stewardson were both founding members of the T-Square Club, active in the Philadelphia chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and lecturers at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Architecture. The firm designed many residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial buildings, but was especially known for its academic buildings at the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton, and Washington University in St. Louis, among others. While designing in many styles and architectural modes, through its collegiate work the firm became particularly identified with Gothic Revival design.[13]

Stewardson's younger brother Emlyn Stewardson (1863-1936) joined the firm around 1886 and was in charge of contracts and engineering. He was educated at Germantown Academy and received a B.S. in Civil Engineering from the University of Pennsylvania in 1884. Emlyn Stewardson was also a member of the T-Square Club and the Philadelphia chapter of the AIA. He became more active with the firm after his brother's death in 1896 and continued the name after Cope's death in 1902. He was the senior member of the firm during the Chestnut Hill Branch project.[14] Architect James P. Jamieson (1867-1941) was the chief designer after Cope's death, with Stewardson continuing his focus on contracts and engineering. Jamieson was born in Scotland and immigrated to the United States in 1884. He worked for various firms in Philadelphia and Minneapolis before joining Cope and Stewardson in 1889 as a draftsman. He continued his education with classes at the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art, and through winning a travel scholarship competition at the University of Pennsylvania. The scholarship enabled him to spend 1893-94 on an architectural study tour of Great Britain, France, Italy, and Greece. He returned to Cope and Stewardson and by 1900 he was a full partner in the firm. He was placed in charge of the firm's St. Louis office, established in 1901 to oversee construction for the Washington University campus. He split his time between St. Louis and Philadelphia until 1912, when he decided to remain in St. Louis and establish an independent firm. Jamieson was likely the chief designer of the Chestnut Hill Branch library.[15]

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[13] "Walter Cope," in Roger Moss and Sandra Tatman, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects, 1700-1930*. (New York: G.K. Hall & Company, 1984), 165-170; "John Stewardson," Moss and Tatman, 761. See also listings for both men in www.philadelphiabuildings.org and Henry F. Withey and Elsie Rathburn Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*, (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1970), 139-140; 574.

[14] "Emlyn Lamar Stewardson," in Moss and Tatman, 759-761; Withey and Withey, 573-574. In 1912 George B. Page became the partner in charge of design and the firm name was changed to Stewardson and Page.

[15] See entry for James P. Jamieson at www.philadelphiabuildings.org. This profile was written by Sandra Tatman.

Section 8: Major Bibliographic References

A. Architectural Drawings: Drawings have not been located for this structure,

B. Early Views: William Rau photographs (one exterior and one interior) in 1908 Free Library *Annual Report*.

An elevation rendering of the proposed library appeared in "New Library Home for Chestnut Hill," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 September 1907, 14.

C. Bibliography
The records of the Free Library of Philadelphia are located at the Central Library on Vine Street. The *Annual Reports* are located in the Municipal Reference Division, Cities P53-1154; and the Carnegie Fund Committee Minute Books are located in the Director's Vault (access by special permission).

Bobinski, George S. *Carnegie Libraries: Their History and Impact on American Public Library Development*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1969.

Buschman, John E. and Gloria J. Leckie, eds. *The Library as Place: History, Community, and Culture*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2007.

Dierickx, Mary B. *The Architecture of Literacy: The Carnegie Libraries of New York City.* New York City: The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Art and Science & NYC Department of General Services, September 1996.

Jones, Theodore. *Carnegie Libraries Across America.* Washington, DC: Preservation Press, 1997.

Koch, Theodore Wesley. *A Portfolio of Carnegie Libraries*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: George Wahr, Publisher, 1907.

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Moss, Roger and Sandra Tatman. *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects, 1700-1930*. New York: G.K. Hall & Company, 1984.

Van Slyck, Abigail. *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries & American Culture, 1890-1920.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn Withey. *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased).* Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1970.

Photographs

Figure 1: Southwest façade of the library

Figure 2: Perspective view of the southwest façade of the library

Figure 3: Detail view of the main entry, located on the southwest elevation

Figure 4: Northwest elevation of the library

Figure 5: Northwest elevation of the library, showing original structure and addition

Figure 6: Northeast corner of the library branch

Figure 7: Southeast elevation

Figure 8: Southeast elevation

Figure 9: Detail view of the southeast elevation entrance

Appendix A (HABS Documentation)