

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCERS use only

received FEB 29 1980

date entered MAY 6 1980

## 1. Name

historic New York Public Library, 115th Street Branch

and/or common

## 2. Location

street & number 203 West 115th Street \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town New York \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district 19

state New York code 036 county New York code 061

## 3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Library

## 4. Owner of Property

James F. Capalino, Commissioner

name Department of General Services

street & number 1800 Municipal Building

city, town New York \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state New York 10007

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. New York County Register's Office

street & number 31 Chambers Street

city, town New York, \_\_\_\_\_ state New York

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

LP-0298

title Landmarks Preservation Commission has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date July 12, 1967 \_\_\_\_\_ federal \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ county ☒ local

depository for survey records Landmarks Preservation Commission 305 Broadway

city, town New York, \_\_\_\_\_ state New York

## 7. Description

### Condition

☐ excellent  
☒ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☐ unaltered  
☒ altered

### Check one

☒ original site  
☐ moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The 115th Street Branch of the New York Public Library occupies a fifty-foot lot in a Harlem neighborhood of brownstone row houses and multi-family tenements. The library is three stories in height, three bays wide, and faced entirely in deeply rusticated grey limestone.

The first story features three evenly spaced round-arched openings; the two westernmost are windows and the eastern one is the main entrance. Horizontal rustication makes a smooth transition to form radiating voussoirs over these openings. A sculptured stone cartouche containing the city's coat of arms and supported by two cherubs is over the central window.

A band course with a Vitruvian wave pattern separates the first and second floors, and forms the sills for the three round-arched windows centered directly over those on the first story.

A plain band course forms the transition to the third story, which features another evenly spaced trio of windows. These are simple rectangular openings, but with the same prominent voussoirs used on the lower floors.

A band course with a Greek fret and the words "New York Public Library" tops the third floor, and the entire composition is terminated by a cornice supported on closely spaced brackets.

The interior of the library is close to original, both in plan and detail. The first floor features a small oak vestibule, the circulation desk and reading room. The second floor houses a children's reading room, and the third, a reading room plus a custodian's apartment. The building is only four bays deep, so the reading rooms are light and airy with windows on two sides.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1907-08

Builder/Architect McKim, Mead & White

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The 115th Street Branch of the New York Public Library is a simple but powerful architectural composition designed by McKim, Mead & White and erected in 1907-08. While the style of the building can be termed neo-Italian Renaissance, the design is a less than literal interpretation. Its merit lies not in the correctness of its historical details, but in the skillfulness with which the architects related the various building elements. The simplicity and sparseness of detail, the deep rustication of the masonry, the smooth transition between floors: all have been handled with great proficiency. The rusticated limestone masonry, unusual in that it covers the entire facade, gives the library a monumental quality in spite of its small size. The building is an example of the small branch libraries built in New York City after the turn of the century, all of which were financed through a gift by philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.

The 115th Street Branch is one in a system of library branches donated to the city by steel baron Andrew Carnegie. Carnegie believed that great fortunes should be distributed by their owners for the public good. This concept did not imply almsgiving or welfare, but the support of activities that would enable the able and ambitious to rise to power and wealth as Carnegie had. "New York's need for public libraries offered him an ideal opportunity to carry out on a large scale his theory of the social responsibility of the rich and to gratify his love of fame as well."<sup>1</sup>

On March 12, 1901, Carnegie offered a gift of \$5,200,000 to the City of New York to erect sixty-five library branches, the average cost of each being \$80,000. The offer was contingent on the city providing for the purchase of the sites and the maintenance of the completed buildings.

Carnegie estimated that about forty branches were needed in Manhattan and the Bronx, and twenty-five for Brooklyn and Queens.

This number would provide one library for approximately every 53,000 persons in New York City. On April 26, 1901, the State legislature authorized the board of estimate to accept Carnegie's offer and the gift was formally accepted on July 17 of that year. On March 26, 1902, the original agreement, which had called for fewer than Carnegie's sixty-five branches, was amended to call for the construction of fifty library branches.

The New York Public Library Trustees contracted with three prominent architectural firms for the design of the Carnegie branches: McKim, Mead & White; Carrère and Hastings; and Babb, Cook, and Willard. While each facade was designed for a particular site, the interior plan of each branch was similar. The standard pattern was a three-story building with adult circulation department on the first floor, a children's room on the second, and an adult reading room on the third, along with the custodian's apartment. By 1914, thirty-seven Carnegie branches were completed. Eleven of these were designed by McKim, Mead & White, New York's



## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

## 10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED  
ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Central Park, N.Y., N. J.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 18 588240 4517180  
Zone Easting Northing

B                    
Zone Easting Northing

C                        

D                        

E                        

F                        

G                        

H                        

Verbal boundary description and justification The nominated property occupies Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1831, Lot 26. See attached site map.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

## 11. Form Prepared By David J. Framberger, Research Consultant

name/title Joan R. Olshansky, National Register Coordinator Contact: Elizabeth Spencer-Ralph  
518-474-0479

organization Landmarks Preservation Commission date December 1979

street & number 305 Broadway telephone   

city or town New York state New York

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

   national    state X local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Stephen Marche*

title Director, Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau

date 2/28/80

For HCERS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for *Bruce Van Duzee*  
Keeper of the National Register

date May 6, 1980

Attest: *Lynn S. Beebe*

date April 22, 1980

Chief of Registration



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115th Street Branch - New York Public Library

Continuation sheet New York County

Item number

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Page 1

most popular architectural firm around the turn of the century, who were responsible for buildings such as the Villard Houses (1884) and the University Club (1899).

Two other branch libraries, the Yorkville Branch and the Hamilton Grange Branch, have been approved for nomination to the National Register. Additional buildings will be submitted after further survey and research efforts have been completed.

<sup>1</sup>Phyllis Dain, The New York Public Library - A History of its Founding and Early Years. (New York: New York Public Library, 1972), 209.

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115th Street Branch - New York Public Library

Continuation sheet New York County, N.Y.

Item number

9

Page 1

Dain, Phyllis. The New York Public Library-A History of its Founding and Early Years. New York: New York Public Library, 1972.

Landmarks Preservation Commission. 115th Street Branch of the New York Public Library Designation Report (LP-0298). New York: City of New York, 1967.

Roth, Leland. A Monograph of the Works of McKim, Mead & White, 1879-1915. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1973.

Stokes, I.N. Phelps, The Iconography of Manhattan Island.V. 5. New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1906.



Robert Hunter Map No 336

New York Public Library, 115th Street  
New York County, NY  
Manhattan Land Book, Pl. 128  
New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1978.

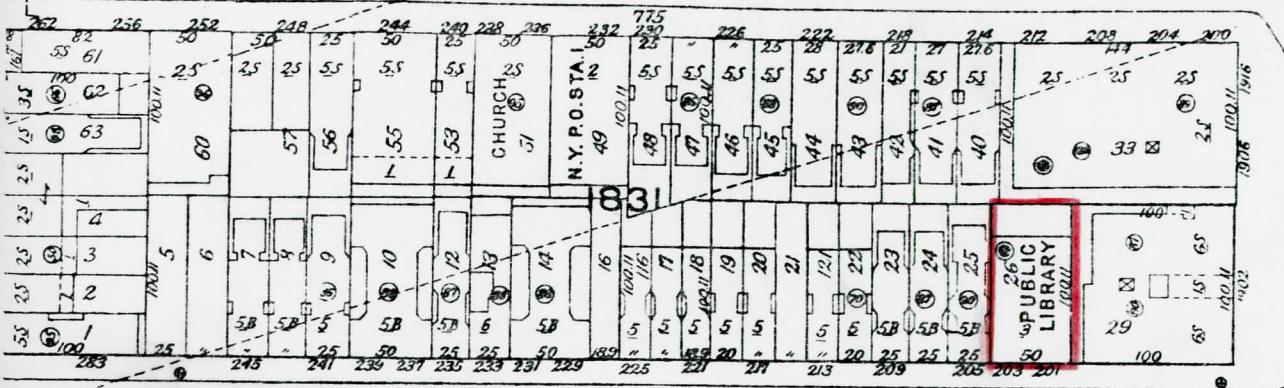
Charles M. Graham Maps

W. 116 TH

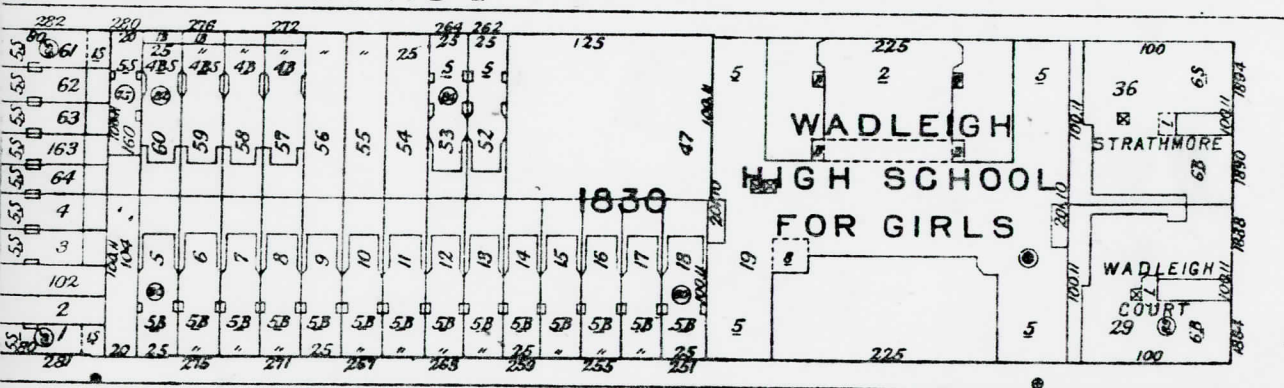


MAY 6 1980

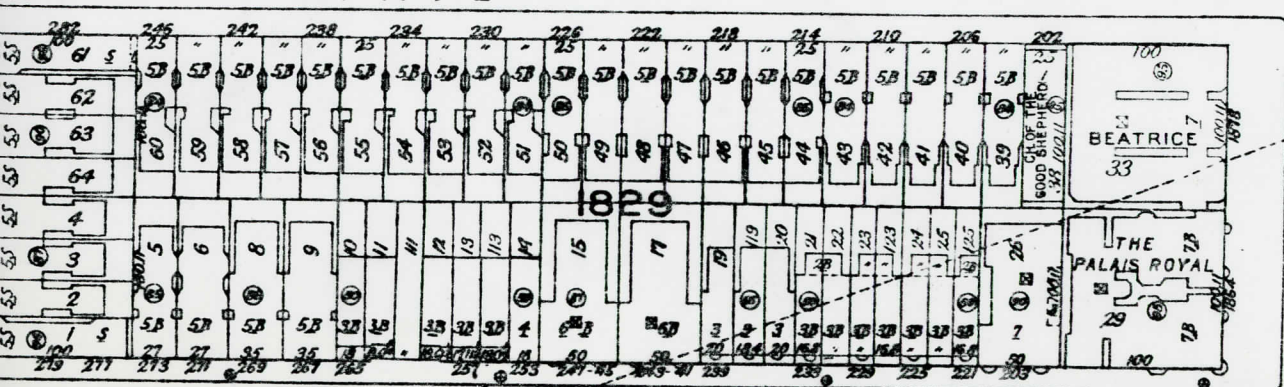
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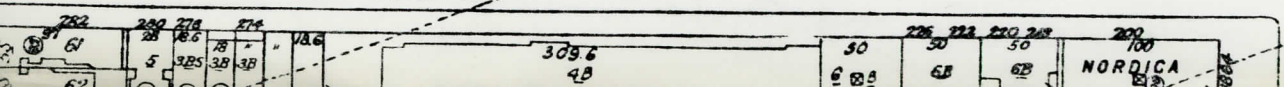
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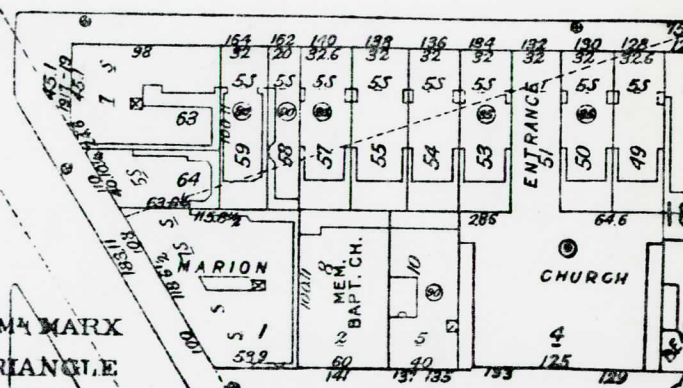
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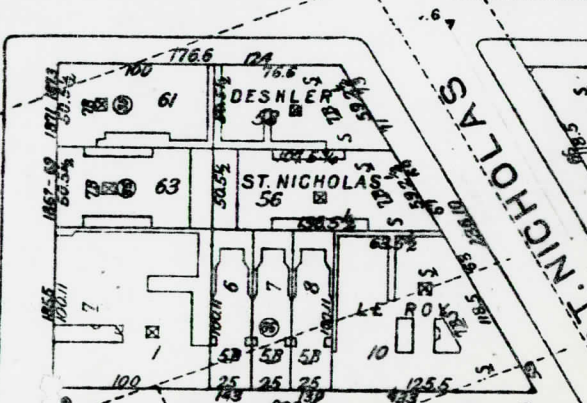
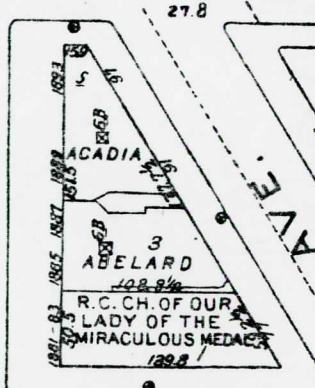
W. 113 TH



SAM MARK  
TRIANGLE



SEVENTH AVE



ST. NICHOLAS



Property

New York Public Library, 115th Street Branch

800002704

State

NY - New York

Working Number

2-29-80 784

TECHNICAL

Photos

2

Maps

2

CONTROL

HISTORIAN

Example of neo-Italian Renaissance design, associated with Andrew Carnegie's philanthropic endeavors & with the prominent archt. firm of McKim, Mead & White.

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

Accept  
L. Beebe  
4/22/80

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory

Review

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

Accept  
L. Beebe  
4/22/80

BRANCH CHIEF

KEEPER

National Register Write-up

Send-back

Entered

Federal Register Entry

2, 3, 81

Re-submit

MAY 6 1980



1. New York Public Library-115th Street Branch  
203 W. 115th Street  
New York, NY *County*  
Photo by: Stephen Senigo, 1979  
Neg. at: New York City Landmarks  
Preservation Commission

Facade

*1/2*

MAY

6 1980

FEB 29 1980





ch 2. New York Public Library-115th Street Branch  
203 West 115th Street  
New York, NY *County*  
Photo by: Stephen Senigo, 1979  
Neg. at: New York City Landmarks  
Preservation Commission

Interior

MAY

6 1980

FEB 29 1980

*2/2*



New York Public Library-115th Street Branch  
New York County, New York  
UTM Reference: 18/ 588240/ 4517180

Central Park Area



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Revised in cooperation with New York  
Department of Transportation  
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and New Jersey Geodetic Survey  
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods and from USC&GS Charts T-4567,  
T-5089, T-5264, T-5278, T-5448, T-5449, T-5451, T-5452, T-5453, T-5458,  
and T-5778. Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs  
taken 1954 and planimetric surveys 1956.  
Revised from aerial photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1966.  
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Charts 226, 274, 745,  
746, and 747 (1966). This information is not intended for navigational purposes.  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum.  
10,000-foot grids based on New York coordinate system, Long Island zone,  
and New Jersey coordinate system.  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 18, shown in blue.  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown.

UTM GRID AND 1979 MAGNETIC NORTH  
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET-DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE  
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER  
THE AVERAGE RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 2 FEET  
4 FEET IN THE HUDSON RIVER AND 5.7 FEET IN THE EAST RIVER

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———  
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt ———  
Interstate Route U.S. Route State Route

Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs  
taken 1977 and other source data. This information  
not field checked. Map edited 1979.

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of  
the National or State reservations shown on this map.

QUADRANGLE LOCATION

CENTRAL PARK, N. Y.-N. J.  
SW/4 HARLEM 15' QUADRANGLE  
N4045-W7352.5-7.5

1966  
PHOTOREVISED 1979  
AMS 6265 IV SW-SERIES V821





ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE    NEW YORK

Date Entered    MAY    6 1980

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Federal Reserve Bank of New York	New York New York County
Seguine House	Staten Island Richmond County
St. Augustine's Chapel	New York New York County
Building at 45 East 66th Street	New York New York County
Scribner Building	New York New York County
American Fine Arts Society	New York New York County
Waldo, Gertrude Rhineland, Mansion	New York New York County
Church of Notre Dame and Rectory	New York New York County
New York Public Library, 115th Street Branch	New York New York County

Also Notified

Honorable Daniel P. Moynihan  
Honorable Jacob K. Javits  
Honorable John M. Murphy  
Honorable S. William Green  
Honorable Charles B. Rangel

State Historic Preservation Officer  
Mr. Orin Lehman  
Commissioner  
Parks and Recreation  
Agency Building #1  
Empire State Plaza  
Albany, New York 12238

NR

Byers/bjr    5/13/80

For further information, please call the National Register at (202)343-6401.