

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: **6942 Woodland Avenue**

Postal code: **19142**

Councilmanic District: **2nd District**

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **Free Library of Philadelphia Paschalville Branch**

Common Name: **Paschalville Library**

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: Library

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

SEE ATTACHED

6. DESCRIPTION

SEE ATTACHED

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Period of Significance (from year to year): **1915**

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: **1915**

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: **Henry C. Richards**

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: **Harry H. Wehmeyer**

Original owner: **Free Library 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: Jonathan Vimr, Graduate Intern

Email: jvimr@design.upenn.edu

Organization: Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia

Date: August 15, 2012

Street Address: 1616 Walnut Street, Suite 1620

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: _____

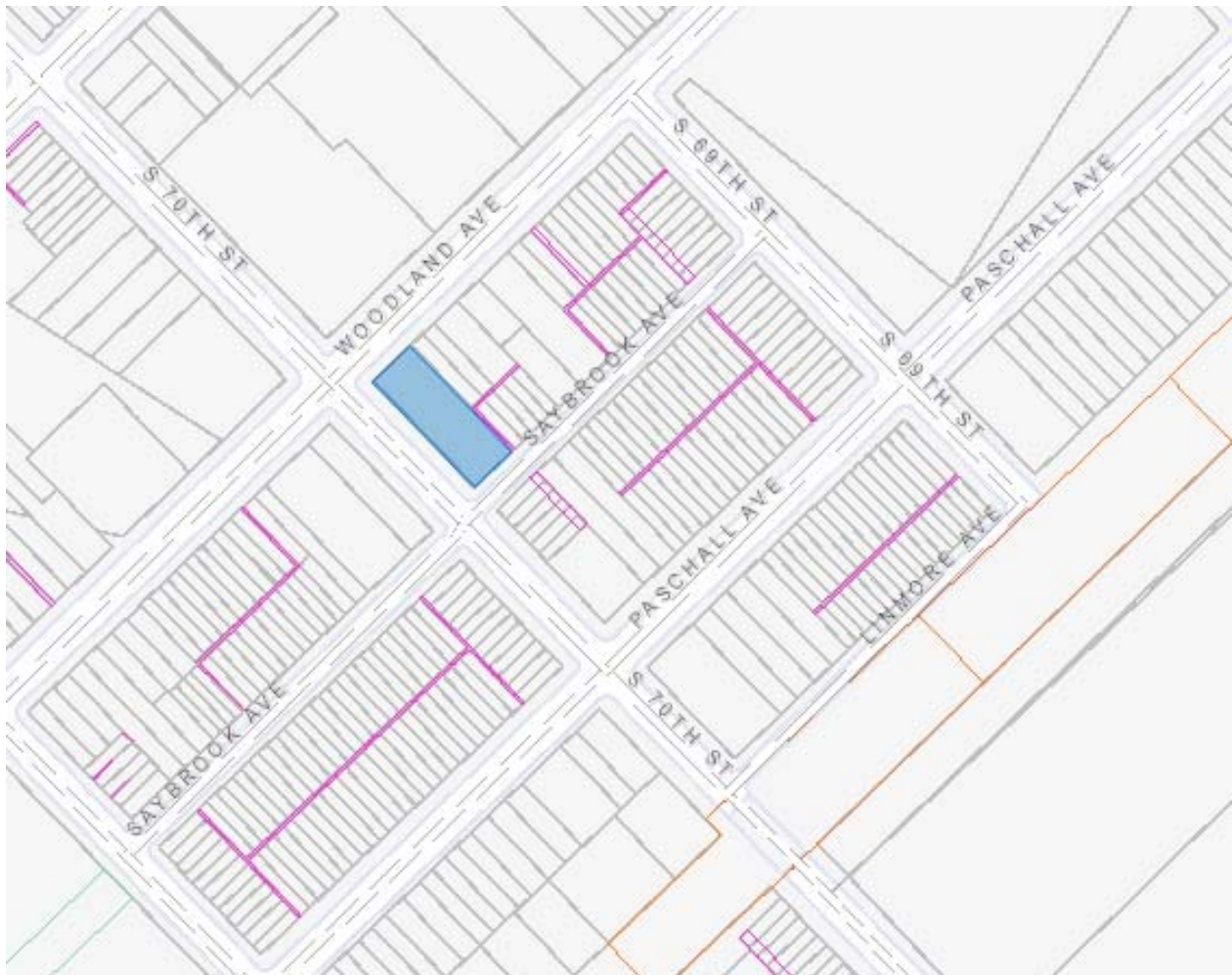
Date of Final Action: _____

☐ Designated ☐ Rejected

3/16/07

5. Boundary Description

Beginning at a point on the southeasterly side of Woodland Avenue and the southeasterly corner of 70th Street, containing in front of breadth on the said Woodland Avenue sixty six feet and extending southeasterly of that width in length or depth between parallel lines parallel with 70th Street one hundred and eighty feet to the northerly side of Saybrook Avenue.



6. Description

A one story, red brick, flat-roofed rectangular building located at 6942 Woodland Avenue in the Paschalville neighborhood of southwest Philadelphia, the Georgian Revival Carnegie library is quite distinct from surrounding buildings. Built on a lot on the southeast corner of 70th Street and Woodland Avenue, the building is primarily oriented along 70th Street and contrasts with the gas station directly across the street, the large stone church at the northwest corner, and the recently built apartment structures to the northeast. Island and Woodland Avenues, the most high-traffic intersection in Paschalville, is a few blocks away, but the intersection at which the library sits is likewise a major pedestrian and automobile node.

Running along the entirety of the eastern side of 70th Street between Woodland and Saybrook Avenue, the building is freestanding but features only three visible facades given its close proximity to its adjacent eastern neighbor. The 84-foot eastern and western elevations form the long end of the rectangle while the 54-foot southern and northern faces form the shorter ends. The monumental central entrance pavilion projects outward from the west elevation, facing 70th Street, and is accessed via a wide staircase. The northern and southern ends both face thoroughfares as well, but that of the north side is distinct in that it fronts onto neighborhood's most significant street, Woodland Avenue. The eastern elevation faces the side of a row home with a narrow space of several feet between the two structures. The building features large windows, pronounced pilasters, and a pleasing, symmetrical form but is quite modest on the whole. Nevertheless, the monumental pavilion and overall proportions clearly delineate the building's significance as a public institution amidst residential and commercial surroundings.

The nine bay western elevation is composed of red brick laid in a Flemish bond pattern (Fig. 1). Most of the windows are six over six wood sash windows, topped by splayed brick jack arches with projecting limestone sills, and flanked on either side by pilasters. The base of these pilasters is a limestone conge molding on top of a bolection molding while the shaft, projecting one course from the remainder of the wall surface, is composed of brick. A limestone capital with an ovolo section topped by a small cornice completes the pilaster model uniformly used across the four elevations. A dressed limestone belt course runs along the top of each pilaster and window opening while a brick parapet with limestone coping runs along the top of the elevation

and steps up at each corner. Basement level windows are placed partially below street grade in window wells.

The only variations on the western elevation result from the grand, full-height entrance pavilion located at the center of the building (Fig. 2). The windows on either side of it are reduced in size to narrow four over four versions while the pavilion itself features flemish bond brick as well as the same brick and limestone pilasters of the rest of the building flanking the entrance door. One of these pilasters is found on either side elevation of the pavilion along with one wood sash window at the center. Yet another pilaster is located at the corner of both pavilion side elevations and wraps around to the front of the pavilion. The brick and limestone entablature running along each side of the pavilion consists of a limestone belt course topped by a brick frieze and a limestone cornice with a row of dentils under a projecting cornice molding with regular soffits. The brick parapet atop the entablature has thick limestone coping and is pierced by a limestone balustrade above the center third of the entrance doorway. A framed limestone tablet is located between the inner pilasters of the pavilion's entrance face with a row of dentils on its bottom edge (Fig. 3). The tablet contains three lines of text that respectively read: "FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA," "PASCHALVILLE," and "BRANCH." The entrance itself features a double-leaf wood and glass doorway set in a limestone surround under a ornamental foliated fascia band and a projecting cornice. The doorway features a large wood-framed multilight transom and is flanked by a pair of sconces.

The northern, Woodland Avenue facing elevation is identical in regards to details, ornament, windows, and pilasters, but is scaled down to only three bays (Fig. 4). Other than its scale, the only difference is a memorial plaque beneath the center window of the elevation that was installed following World War I. White limestone molding carved with bundled rod and rosette motifs surround the plaque while a high relief wreath framing a stars and stripes shield is placed above the plaque at top center (Fig. 11).

The nine bay eastern elevation retains uniformity in its windows, pilasters, roof, etc., but features a full-height, flat-roofed brick entrance pavilion at its northern end. This entrance pavilion is small and spare in relation to that of the western facade, but provides an accessible entrance. A straight run staircase leading to a subterranean basement doorway is found at the southern end of the elevation.

Completing the symmetry of the building, the southern elevation is mostly identical to the northern (Fig. 5). It lacks the memorial plaque of the northern face and the basement level windows differ from those of the other sides in that they are hopper-style sash with three horizontal lights, but it is otherwise uniform. The windows, pilasters, courses, and other details found on the other elevations are all maintained.



Figure 1: Looking southeast at the western elevation and principal façade of the library. Large-format photography was undertaken for HABS (ref. NO. PA-6761) by Joseph Elliott in the summer of 2007.



Figure 2: A view of the entrance pavilion on the western elevation, Joseph Elliott, 2007.



Figure 3: A detail of the entrance pavilion and the library sign, Joseph Elliott, 2007.



Figure 4: A view looking southeast depicting the northern and western elevations, Joseph Elliott, 2007.



Figure 5: A view of the southern elevation, Joseph Elliott, 2007.



Figure 6: The western façade, September 2012.



Figure 7: The pavilion, September 2012.



Figure 8: Detail of the pavilion cornice, September 2012



Figure 9: The northern elevation, September 2012.



Figure 10: View of the northern entrance, entrance ramp, and proximity with the adjacent structure (though it appears the two buildings are touching, they are not).



Figure 11: Detail of the WWI plaque on the northern elevation.



Figure 12: View of the southern elevation, September 2012.

7. Significance

The Paschalville Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia is significant as an historic building in Philadelphia and should be listed individually on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places under criteria (a) and (h). For criteria (a), the building has significant interest or value as part of the City's development, the history of public libraries in the United States and its association with Pittsburgh industrialist Andrew Carnegie. For criteria (h), the building's location was originally chosen for its prominence within the community and it remains a highly visible and accessible neighborhood amenity.

Criteria A: The building has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth, and Nation and is associated with important individuals: Andrew Carnegie.

Andrew Carnegie's Library Program¹

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:

¹ This section has been adapted from previous Carnegie library branch nominations written by and with approval from John Gallery of the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia.

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 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.²

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 Philadelphia³

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 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.

² *Annual Reports of the Library Board*, 14 July 1904.

³ This section has been adapted from previous Carnegie library branch nominations written by and with approval from John Gallery of the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia.

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.⁴ 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."⁵ 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."⁶ 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.

⁴ 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. Russell Frank Weigly, Editor, *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History* (Barra Foundation Book, New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), 526

⁵ Theodore Wesley Koch, *A Book of Carnegie Libraries* (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1917), 85.

⁶ Ibid.

The Paschalville Branch

Built 1913-1915, the Paschalville Branch was the seventeenth of the twenty-five branch libraries built in Philadelphia from a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. It is typical of Philadelphia's Carnegie libraries in that it follows an open stack plan, uses a patterned form of brick construction, and employs modest high-style design. Due to the narrow rectangular lot on which it was built, the Paschalville Branch was unable to follow the traditional T plan used in most all other Philadelphia branch libraries. As the rear ell of the T plan libraries was used for lecture rooms, the middle third of the Paschalville library was partitioned off by a cased opening with a pocket door to delineate a lecture and event space.

The Paschalville Branch was among the second stage of Carnegie libraries built when the city targeted underserved areas largely located in western and southern Philadelphia. The relatively isolated neighborhood of Paschalville in former Kingsessing Township was established in 1810 by Henry Paschal and became an industry driven neighborhood by 1900. Among others, Fels Naptha Soap Company and the Brill Company were both based in Paschalville. The opportunities provided by rapid, industrial growth lead the area to become heavily working class, particularly populated by immigrants.⁷

The neighborhood's first library was a branch of the Free Library established in 1900 at the corner of 70th Street and Paschalville's main thoroughfare, Woodland Avenue. Located in the ground floor of a house, the small library circulated a collection of around 2500 volumes.⁸ As a result of the original location's limitations, The Free Library noted in its 1906 Annual Report that the Paschalville Branch was in dire need of an improved, modern upgrade.⁹ The same site on which the previous library stood was chosen and the appointed architect H.R. Richards was appointed and instructed to prepare design in May 1912.¹⁰ The architects behind Philadelphia's Carnegie libraries were selected so as to avoid the cost and time of competitions. Other than his place as a partner at 'Wilson and Brothers and Richards' there is little documentation of

⁷ Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), "Free Library of Philadelphia, Paschallville Branch," National Park Service, 2007, HABS No. PA-6761, 5.

⁸ "The Free Library of Philadelphia," *Public Libraries* 5, no. 4 (April 1900): 176

⁹ Free Library of Philadelphia, *Eleventh Annual Report* (1906), 27.

¹⁰ Free Library of Philadelphia, *Carnegie Fund Committee Meeting Minutes* (17 May 1912), 20.

Richards' other work.¹¹ His design was for a modest, a one story, brick, 54 by 84 feet rectangular structure stretching along 70th street at the cost of \$52,095.¹²

Richards' plans were approved at a Carnegie Fund Committee meeting in July 1913 and the building permit was issued shortly after.¹³ Construction began almost immediately and the library opened on April 20, 1915.¹⁴ Since its opening the lighting, flooring, and other interior appointments have received various updates, but the structure has had few substantial changes. Indeed other than a plaque added to the northern elevation after WWI, the exterior has remained essentially untouched. Still serving the community today, the Paschalville branch of the Free Library has, like many Carnegie libraries across the country, remained a valued, tangible reminder of the neighborhood's history. Associated with Andrew Carnegie, a prominent Pennsylvanian and American figure, and clearly possessing significant interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of the city, the Paschalville Branch of the Free Library is of clear importance to the built heritage of the Paschalville neighborhood and the City of Philadelphia.

Criteria H: Owing to its unique location and distinctive appearance, the Paschalville Library represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community and City.

Contrasting greatly from the residential and commercial buildings nearby, the neo-Georgian architectural style of the Paschalville Branch affords the structure great distinction along this section of Woodland Avenue and surrounding streets. Like most all Carnegie libraries, it possesses particular features that mark it as such: open, buffer land exists on all but one side of the structure, the building is accessed via a stairway and grand pavilion, the envelope is strictly symmetrical, and it is largely composed of red brick. Though brick was among the more expensive building materials, Carnegie funded its use because it requires less long-term maintenance and thereby makes the operating costs significantly cheaper for the library and/or

¹¹ HABS, 7.

¹² Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee Meeting Minutes (15 April 1915), 51; History of the Paschalville Branch on the Free Library website at www.freelibrary.org/branches/history.cfm?loc=PAC

¹³ "Library Branch Will Be Built," Philadelphia Inquirer, 22 July 1913, 11.

¹⁴ HABS, 2.

community. With distinctive architecture and a prominent position along Woodland Avenue, the Paschalville Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia is an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood.

8. Major Bibliographic References

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).

American Architects and Buildings database, biography, Windrim, John Torrey,
www.philadelphiabuldings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/21563.

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

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.

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Moss, Roger and Sandra Tatman. *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects*. Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1985.

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

The documentation of the Paschalville Branch Library was 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 Andrew 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. Measured drawings were prepared of the Paschalville Branch as the typical branch library during

the summer of 2007. The drawings team was led by Robert Arzola, working with Jason McNatt, Paul Davidson, and Ann Kidd, architectural technicians.
HABS No. PA-6757