

SURVEY-INVENTORY FORM
COMMUNITY CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY

1. NAME

Historic

Seattle Public Library - West Seattle Branch

*(Carnegie Library
of Washington)*

and/or Common

Same

2. LOCATION

UTM References:

Zone 10 Easting 546350

Northing 5269910

Street & Number

2306 - 42nd Avenue S.W.

Duwamish Head

1:24 000

- not for publication

City, Town

Seattle

- vicinity of

State

Washington

County

King

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership:

public

private

both

Status:

occupied

unoccupied

work in progress

Present Use:

agriculture

commercial

educational

entertainment

government

industrial

military

museum

park

private residence

religious

scientific

transportation

other: Library

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

Name

City of Seattle

Street & Number

600 - 4th Avenue

City, Town

Seattle

- vicinity of

State

Washington 98104

5. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

6. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title

James H. Vandermeer, Historian

Organization

Office of Archaeology & Historic Preservation

Date

August 1981

Street & Number

111 West 21st Avenue

Telephone

(206) 753-9685

City or Town

Olympia

State

Washington 98504

7. DESCRIPTION

Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed
Circle one: unaltered altered
Circle one: original site moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance
attach photo

The West Seattle branch is a long rectangular building in a neighborhood of pleasant homes and small businesses. The main entrance, which is located on the west facade, is symmetrically placed in the middle between sets of tall windows. Constructed of red brick, the building is decorated with blond brick and buff-colored terra cotta. The building has a low hip roof above a brick parapet. There is an aura of imposing size and ordered symmetry about the West Seattle library. An unusually wide flight of concrete stairs, probably the building's most notable feature, contributes to this feeling.

Verbal boundary description:

Lots 1-7, Block 2, Plat of West Seattle

Acreage: Less than one.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

Specific dates	1910	Builder/Architect	Somervell & Cote
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a. History

(A general history of the Seattle Public Library and its buildings follows the inventory form for the West Seattle Branch.)

Part of the site occupied by the West Seattle branch was contributed by U.R. Niesz, and an additional lot was bought with funds contributed by several other citizens. Andrew Carnegie provided \$35,000 of the \$38,344.48 required to construct it. The local firm of Somervell and Cote won the competition to design this library and several others. The building, which has seen only superficial changes, has served the citizens of the community since its opening in 1910, and there are no current plans to discontinue using it for library service.

b. Evaluation of Significance

This building is a well-preserved example of a Carnegie library and has been an important focus for the intellectual and social life of the neighborhood it serves. The firm of Somervell and Cote designed it and three other Seattle branch libraries--the University, the Green Lake and the Douglass-Truth branches. These buildings, which all bear a family resemblance, are all still working libraries. This fact alone must attest to the virtuosity of the design. The particularly felicitous feature common to all four buildings is the great width of the stairs and walks leading to the entrance. This feature tends to make the number of stairs seem less formidable and vertiginous, and it also provides a convenient stage for informal outdoor conversations and meetings among library users.