

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received JAN 19 1984  
date entered

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

**1. Name** DANFORTH MEMORIAL LIBRARY, ~~THE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF~~  
~~PATERSON~~

historic

and/or common Paterson Free Public Library

**2. Location**

street & number 250 Broadway N/A not for publication

city, town Paterson vicinity of congressional district

state New Jersey code 034 county Passaic code 031

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Board of Library Trustees of the City of Paterson, NJ

street & number 250 Broadway

city, town Paterson vicinity of state New Jersey

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Passaic County Court House (Deed BK H 15)

street & number

city, town Paterson state NJ 07503

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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

### DESCRIPTION

Danforth Memorial, the Free Public Library of the City of Paterson, was formally dedicated and opened to the public on April 29, 1905. This two story limestone structure is a rectangular monumental Classical Revival building with four monumental columns in antis standing at the southeast corner of Broadway and Auburn Streets, near the commercial downtown of Paterson. Designed by prominent architect Henry Bacon, the library is visually a prominent landmark in the city. Later alterations have been relatively minor and the addition to the rear respects the overall character of the original design.

The local paper, the PATERSON MORNING CALL of April 29, 1905, contained the following description:

"In architectural style the building is pure Greek of the Ionic order. In the simplicity and perfect harmony of its lines throughout, and especially in its monumental colonnaded front, it displays great beauty and impressive dignity. The material of the structure is limestone on a granite foundation.

The substantial retaining walls to the right and left of the front of the building and the broad flight of steps leading up between to the main entrance with the notably handsome light standards on eight sides make an impressive and pleasing combination of architectural features.

One enters through large plate glass doors, and passing through a small marble vestibule reaches to the main stairs and principal corridor. The floors here are of terrazo and the walls have a high wainscoting of pure white Vermont marble.

Straight ahead, crossing the main entrance hall, is the long corridor running east and west. The south wall of the corridor consists of five great arches, two on either side.

Stack room: Here in four stories of steel book stacks is shelving for about sixty thousand volumes. This part of the building is entirely fireproof and is so placed that it may be enlarged in the future at comparatively small expense, so as to increase the shelving capacity of the building to almost any extent."

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DESCRIPTION

The January 1906 issue of the ARCHITECTS' AND BUILDERS MAGAZINE included a description and four illustrative photographs of the library in an article entitled: "The Rebuilding of Paterson, New Jersey, After the Fire of February, 1902." It described the building as:

"... an imposing structure of gray limestone of very simple yet impressive design. In the rear of the building is a separate wing the same height as the rest of the structure which is devoted to book stacks."

Carved on top center facade is the name of the library with a commemoration of the library's erection date together with two emblematic wreaths. A frieze is atop the front facade and runs around the sides of the building. Carved on the frieze is a total of 33 names taken from the great classical works. According to Mr. Henry Bacon's letter of February 26, 1906, there are a total of 212 letters in the frieze.

In the entrance hall of the Danforth Memorial library is a large bronze memorial tablet carved with a symbolic angel-figure in bas-relief commemorating the donor of the building, Mrs. Mary E. Ryle, Charles Danforth's daughter. The architectural marble framing for this tablet was designed by Bacon. The sculpture was executed by Miss Evelyn B. Longman. (Miss Longman also collaborated with Bacon and Daniel French in the sculpture work completed for the Lincoln Memorial.)

Although one reason, if not the main, for the selection of Bacon's architectural plans was the ability to enlarge the building to meet the needs of future population, actually little changes were made either to the exterior or interior of the building. Over the years, the Library Board of Trustees opened branches in various sections of the city rather than alter the building.

There is no record of when the building's heating system was converted from coal to oil. The coal bins were apparently turned into storage area. A small passenger elevator was also added. The elevator appears to have been placed where the coal chute had been located.

The local architectural firm of Tischler and Comerro was hired in 1967 to renovate the building. This firm removed a staircase adjacent to the stack area and added a small addition to the rear westside of the building. The following changes were made to the interior: removal of two of the three skylights and the installation of a new overhead lighting system and airconditioning in new dropped ceilings on the two floors. A second floor corridor was removed and was replaced by another corridor. The Assembly Room on the second floor was divided.

For the most part the physical changes in the building come under the category of interior decorating. The interior of the building was repainted and the furniture was modernized and refurbished.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates**      1905                      **Builder/Architect**      Henry Bacon

**Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)**

SIGNIFICANCE

The Danforth Memorial Free Public Library of Paterson was designed by architect Henry Bacon and is an important example of his work (which includes the Lincoln Memorial). The building is one of the finest Classical Revival edifices in Paterson and was erected as a monument to Charles Danforth, one of the city's great industrialists. Completed in 1905, after the disastrous 1902 city-wide fire had destroyed the original library, the Danforth Library continues to function as the main library in the city. The Paterson library system (established in 1884) is the oldest Free Public Library in the state. As a humanitarian gesture, the library is a grand expression of a local philanthropic effort to provide educational and social amenities to the working classes.

Education

As a consequence of an 1884 New Jersey State law, Paterson established the first Free Public Library in the State of New Jersey. The first library building, opened in 1885, soon proved to be inadequate. In 1888 Mary E. Ryle, wife of a local silk magnate, donated to the city her late father's home as the new library site. Her intent was to present a fitting memorial to her father, Charles Danforth. Her donation included \$70,000 to remodel the building for its new use. The only provision to this gift was the stipulation that the library would be renamed the Danforth Memorial, the Free Public Library of the City of Paterson.

Charles Danforth came to Paterson as a young man and soon carved out a great industrial history. Danforth was the inventor of a cotton spinner which would be used worldwide and would become known as the "Danforth Frame." Danforth also became President of the Danforth Locomotive Company. He was one of the great pioneering locomotive builders in the City of Paterson.

A great fire engulfed the City of Paterson in February, 1902. Among the many buildings destroyed was the then existing Danforth Memorial Library—the Free Public Library of the City of Paterson.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1 1/2 acres

Quadrangle name Paterson

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

1	8	5	7	0	3	6	0	4	5	2	9	7	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Block 810, Lots 1,2,3,4,5,6 (Paterson Tax Map)

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. Helen A. Kehoe, Supervising Librarian

organization Danforth Memorial Library, The Free Public Library of the City of Paterson date March 11, 1983

street & number 250 Broadway telephone 201-881-7038

city or town Paterson state New Jersey 07501

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Russell W. Meyer

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date January 4, 1984

For NPS use only  
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register  
Entered in the National Register date 3/1/84  
for Sharon Byers  
Keeper of the National Register  
Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
Chief of Registration

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SIGNIFICANCE

Immediately the city began a rebuilding program. The Library Board of Trustees embarked on a plan to rebuild and relocate the city's library. The Board of Trustees appealed to Mrs. Mary E. Ryle to help with the expenses of the new building. Mrs. Ryle again came to the rescue of the Board of Trustees with the necessary financial assistance. It was Mrs. Ryle's intent, and that of the Library Board, that the new building should be a splendid architectural monument.

The Board engaged Professor Alfred D. F. Hamlin, of Columbia University, a distinguished and noted author in the field of architecture and architectural history as its consultant. An architectural competition was decided upon. From the competition, Professor Hamlin selected four plans and submitted them along with his recommendations to the Library Board of Trustees for its ultimate decision. After studying Professor Hamlin's recommendations, at a special Board meeting held on October 30, 1903, the Trustees awarded the contract to the winning bid which had been submitted by the firm of Brite & Bacon of New York City.

On August 31, 1903, the firm of Brite and Bacon notified the trustees that the firm had been dissolved and;

"Mr. Bacon has, by agreement with Mr. Brite, acquired control of the work entrusted to the firm by you, and after date, all bills for commissions on this work will be presented in the name of Mr. Bacon."

This action thereby made Henry Bacon the sole architect of the building.

Patersonians had been in the forefront for the development of the free public library in the State of New Jersey. On the occasion of the laying of the cornerstone on October 31, 1903 Mayor John Hinchliffe remarked:

"We of Paterson have also reason to be proud because the Act of the Legislature that first made Free Public Libraries a possibility in this State originated with, and was carried to a successful issue by a Patersonian now the Rev. William Prall, who at that time was a member of the Legislature".

It was also clear that the city intended to erect a library building of enduring enrichment for the peoples of Paterson not only in its collections of material but in the building itself. For Mayor Hinchliffe continued:

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"The rehabiliment of the Free Public Library so soon after our fire, further proves that the inspiration of restoring and improving our city did not stop with our men, and if there is anything within our city that will improve the character of our citizens, it is this edifice: it not only bends the twig but so lidifies those maturing minds."

Further evidence that a building of significance was intended can be found in Dr. Elias Marsh's remarks on the same occasion.

"The extent of the foundation walls gives evidence of ample accommodation provided for books and for readers. Enough of the superstructure has been raised to indicate that it will be an architectural adornment of our city and the material and the masonry show faithful and excellent workmanship... Completed you will have here a lasting monument to the intelligence and public spirit of the citizens of present times in establishing and maintaining a Free Public Library, bearing the name of an honored and eminent citizen of former days and presented to the city by a liberal and public spirited lady, to whom we owe our gratitude, respect and affection."

Recognition of the building and its purpose was further contained in the remarks of the prinicipal speaker of that day. A Patersonian, Vice Chancellor Eugene Stevens, of the New Jersey Chancery Court, expressed the following sentiments:

"This corner-stone which we have laid-these massive walls which we are building, must speak for themselves, and they are more eloquent by far than any voice of mortal man. They tell the passer by in the street that they are being raised and fashioned into a temple consecrated to the advancement of knowledge and education, not only among all who dwell in the city of Paterson, but also among thousands who are yet to come into the world and dwell here through the coming years and centuries. What we are doing today calls for no apology or even explanation. Its significance and power are open to the view of all. The opinions of men may differ in regard to the usefulness and value of particular institutions devoted to politics, art, or even religion. But the man who would be allowed to scoff at a church with impunity, if he spoke otherwise than in terms of respect and honor of a great public library would be silenced or contemptuously dismissed as a fool.

"...This building will be the home of the Free Public Library of Paterson. It will be an architectural ornament to our city. It has been skillfully

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SIGNIFICANCE

designed to meet all the requirements of the most efficient modern library work. It will also stand as an enduring memorial of a benefaction which in its wisdom and usefulness, is unparalleled in the history of our town. ...A sacred duty rests upon us today and will devolve upon those who take our places, to strive in every way to realize the hopes and wishes of the donor's heart, and maintain her great gift in full efficiency for the accomplishment of the noble work to which it is devoted."

It is apparent that the city, the donor, and the participant at the laying of the cornerstone intended to build a library which would provide the basic democratic citizen's right to the free flow of information to all Patersonians living then and to the future generations of the city. It is also apparent that it was also their intent to make the building itself a great architectural monument worthy of the admiration of all who would see and use it throughout time.

The building was formally dedicated on April 29, 1905. The city was elated and delighted with its new library building. These sentiments were expressed by the principal speaker, a Patersonian, former Governor of New Jersey and former member of President McKinley's cabinet. The Honorable John W. Griggs most eloquent remarks were as follows:

"Out of the ashes of the old has risen the new nobler structure, an ornament as well as a utility to our city, a building to rejoice over, to behold with admiration and to regard with civic pride. And over it, like the visible glory of the temple of old, shines the lovely light of the splendid generosity which, for all time, will associate the name of Mary E. Ryle with the grandest public institution of our city."

The Honorable William Belcher, the then Mayor of Paterson, also expressed similar feelings when he said:

"My great regret today is that I have not the tongue to properly express the feelings that possess me. I am here not only in behalf of my fellow citizens who in common are to enjoy this magnificent building and its contents but I am here for myself as well to try and express though feebly my appreciation of what has come to our great city in the completion of this temple of education."



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ARCHITECTURE

Mr. Henry Bacon, the architect of the building is considered to have been one of America's most foremost architects in the late 19th - early 20th century. He was born in Watseka, Illinois in 1866. Bacon won the Rotch Traveling Scholarship and spent two years traveling and studying throughout Europe. On his return, he rejoined McKim, Mead and White for a period of six years. He then entered into a partnership with James Brite and maintained an office under the name of Brite & Bacon until 1902. Bacon continued his business from then on in his own firm. Undoubtedly, his most recognized work is the Lincoln Memorial. Bacon was the recipient of the AIA gold medal for this monument. Bacon died in 1924.

Patersonians were not wrong when they were describing the Paterson library as an architectural adornment. As early as 1906, the July issue of the "Architectural Review" quoted the June issue of "Architecture", as follows: "and a thoroughly charming library at Paterson, N.J. by Mr. Henry Bacon." In 1956, Withey had this to say:

"A distinguished architect whose works are to be found in many different cities, he will be long be remembered as the designer of the Lincoln Memorial... .. Among the notable examples of his work should be named the Danforth Memorial Library (sic) 1906..."

The following remarks are to be found in the biographical sketch of Henry Bacon which appeared in the Encyclopedia of Americana, 1978, ed.:

"A strict adherent to the classic Greek style of architecture, Bacon designed several important buildings, among them the public library in Paterson, N.J.; the Court of Four Season at the Panama-Pacific Exposition, San Francisco, and the Lincoln Memorial (q.v.) in Washington, D.C. dedicated in 1922.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bacon, Henry, All of the architectural plans for the Library drawn by Bacon and his staff (donated to Danforth library by his estate.)

Henry Bacon Correspondence: August 31, 1903; February 26, 1906.

Henry Bacon Estate: C.H. Weisler, November 12, 1924, transmitting 3 boxes of the original Paterson Library architectural plans as a donation to the library.

Library Materials: Minutes of the following meetings of the Library Board of Trustees: October 30, 1902; December 4, 1902, June 4, 1903, August 31, 1903.

Monographs: "Laying of the Cornerstone of the Danforth Memorial Library Building, Paterson, N.J. - October 24, 1903; 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 37th Annual Reports of Library Board of Trustees.

"Henry Bacon," in Dictionary of American Biography, v. 20, p. 339.

"Henry Bacon," in Encyclopedia of Americana, 1978 ed. v. 3, p. 27.

"Henry Bacon" in Henry F. and Elsie R. Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects Deceased, 1956 ed., p. 29.

"James Brite" in Henry F. and Elsie R. Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects Deceased, 1956, p. 77.

"Alfred Dwight Foster Hamlin" in Who Was Whom, v. 5., p. 512.

"Evelyn Longman" in Dictionary of American Biography, v. 4., p. 511, 512.

Newspapers:

Morning Call (Paterson): April 29, 1905, December 1, 1928.

Paterson Daily Press, April 29, 1905, vol. XXXII, page 1.

Paterson Evening News: April 29, 1905, March 18, 1928, December 17, 1982.

Paterson Press Guardian, April 29, 1905, p.1.

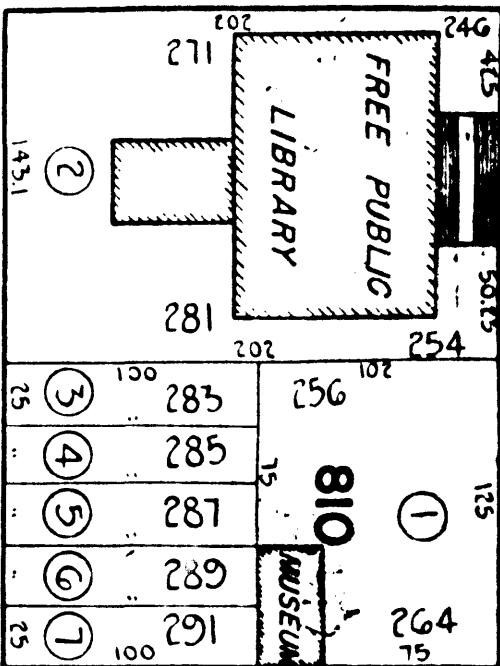
Miscellaneous:

Lincoln Memorial Commission Report: June 28, 1912.

BROADWAY

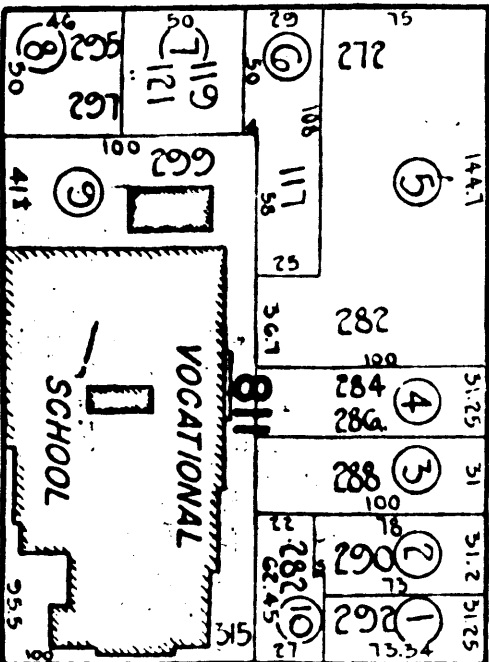
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ST.



ST.

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1	126	(25)	120



ST.

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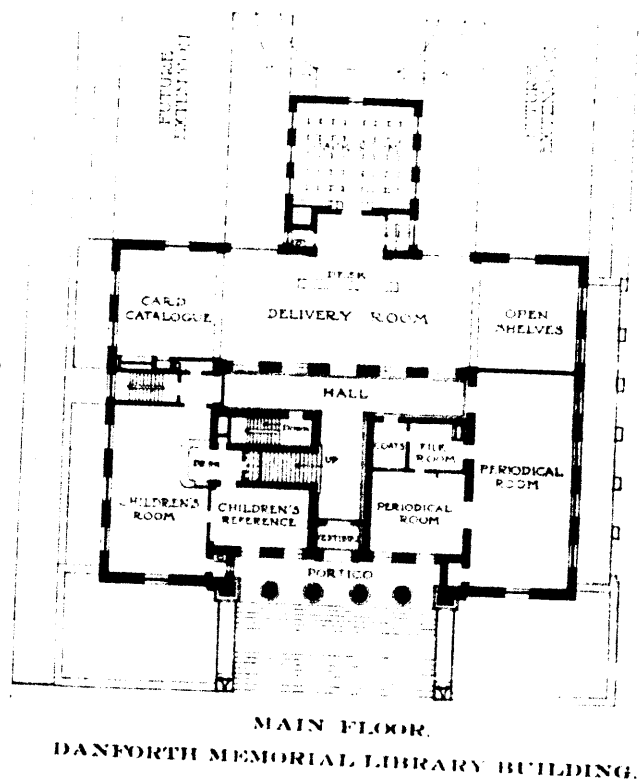
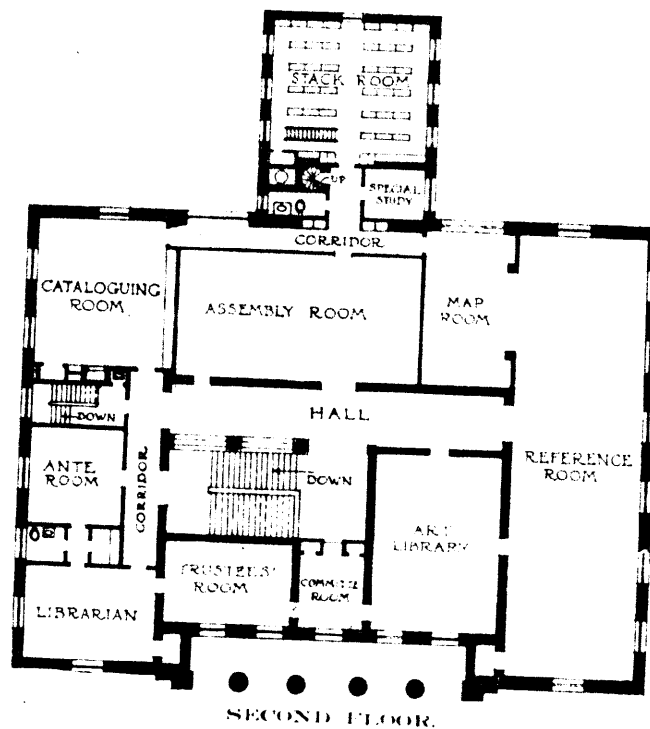
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336	(24)	336	338	(21)	338
342	(24)	342	344	(20)	344

ST.

30	(2)	30	(1)
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15	(9)	15	(8)	15	(7)	15	(6)	15	(5)	15	(4)	15	(3)	15	(2)	15	(1)
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100	(9)	100	(8)	100	(7)	100	(6)	100	(5)	100	(4)	100	(3)	100	(2)	100	(1)
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Original floor plan for the library. 1904-05.

Danforth Memorial Library  
City of Paterson  
Passaic County, New Jersey

Original front elevation for Danforth Library by Bacon & Brite, 1903

