

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED JAN 29 1980  
DATE ENTERED MAR 27 1980

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Louisville Free Public Library

AND/OR COMMON Louisville Free Public Library

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 301 West York Street

CITY, TOWN Louisville VICINITY OF \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY Jefferson CODE 111  
STATE Kentucky CODE 021  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 3&4  
NOT FOR PUBLICATION

**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 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Louisville Free Public Library Board

STREET & NUMBER 301 West York Street

CITY, TOWN Louisville VICINITY OF \_\_\_\_\_ STATE Kentucky 40203

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Jefferson County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER 517 West Jefferson Street

CITY, TOWN Louisville VICINITY OF \_\_\_\_\_ STATE Kentucky 40203

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Kentucky Survey of Historic Sites

DATE 1978  
 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Kentucky Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN Frankfort, Kentucky STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input 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

The Louisville Free Public Library is on the southern edge of Louisville's central business district. Other significant structures in the vicinity include the Fifth Ward School (National Register, March, 1978), the YMCA, (National Register, December, 1977), the Weissinger Gaulbert Apartments (National Register, December, 1977), the Brown Hotel (National Register, February, 1978), and the Heyburn Building (passed Kentucky State Review Board, May 1979).

The Louisville Free Public Library is the most outstanding example of Beaux-Arts Classicism in Louisville. The architects considered the building to be derivative of the style of Louis XVI, which is most appropriate in Louisville's close connection with the French King.

The building is a two and a half story structure of Bowling Green limestone which follows a T-shaped plan. The main facade which faces York Street is dominated by the two-story portico. The portico consists of two pairs of fluted Ionic columns and one pair of fluted Ionic pilasters on either side of an arched entry. The columns support a banded architrave and an elaborately carved frieze is decorated with rinceau motifs, which have putti in the center. The central area of the frieze, over the entrance, contains the word LIBRARY, which is flanked by two panels with medallions and swags. All exterior sculpture on the building, including the capitals of the columns, were done "in situ." The portico is capped by a pediment with dentils and a corbel table. The entry is encased in stone with an architrave which is embellished with dentils and cartouche and volutes. Above the doorway is a stone archway with windows. The entry is further emphasized by a perron, typical of Beaux-Arts plans.

The entrance is flanked by two identical wings. A raised basement level is observable in the wings. The first and second floors consist of five windows set in plain stone walls. Stone panels, decorated with three interlaced fleur-de-lis, separate the first floor windows. Below each window of the first floor is a stone panel with the name of a discipline. The second floor windows are encased in stone with lions' heads protruding from the sills. The wings have an extended cornice with a corbel table and dentils. Lions heads also protrude from the cornice. The corners of the building are chamfered. In the center of each end is a bay with two Doric columns supporting a pediment with a corbel table. In the bay is a niche with a grotesque head in the center. The bay is above a basement entrance which has an iron fence in front of it. A fleur-de-lis panel flanks each side of the bay. The chamfered walls are embellished with great bronze heads which were part of a fountain. The rear of the building forms the base of the "T" and was the area of the work rooms. It is this area which connects the library to the new addition of 1969.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input 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                      1906-1908                      BUILDER/ARCHITECT    Pilcher and Tachau

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Louisville Free Public Library is significant as the finest example of the Beaux-Arts style in Louisville.<sup>1</sup> The Carnegie-endowed building was designed by the prominent New York architecture firm of Pilcher and Tachau. The Library is one of the most important cultural and educational institutions in the city.

The Louisville Free Public Library is an outgrowth of the Public Library of Kentucky and the Polytechnic Society. The Scottish Society headed a drive to obtain a grant from Andrew Carnegie to build a Carnegie Library. In anticipation of this the Polytechnic Society changed its name to the Louisville Library in 1902.

In order to receive the grant, certain stipulations had to be met which included guaranteed annual income of ten per cent of the original grant for maintenance. The necessary state and local legislation was adopted in 1902. The state allowed the establishment of free public libraries by cities and the local government authorized the mayor to appoint twelve trustees for four year terms and levy an annual tax.

The Louisville Free Public Library was formed and trustees appointed, much to the dismay of the Louisville Library. The Louisville Free Public Library and the Louisville Library later merged giving the Louisville Free Public Library 65,00 volumes and a temporary home. A site was selected between Third and Fourth Streets on York for the new building. A grant of \$250,000 was received from Mr. Carnegie on April 12, 1902.

Considerable planning went into the library. The Library Planning Committee was more concerned with a structure which functioned well as a library than one which was a grandiose architectural display. The Library Committee decided to have an architectural competition. Anderson Hopkins, the Librarian for the Free Public Library, and Professor William Ware of Columbia University's School of Architecture established the format for the competition and would make recommendations to the committee. Ten architects were to be invited, who were to include the Louisville firms of Clarke and Loomis, D.X. Murphy, Henry Wolters and J.B. Hutchings as well as the firms of Albert Randoff Ross

In terms of its being representative of the Beaux Arts Style as applied to public buildings, it can also be said to be one of the finest examples in the state.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Books to Read for Everybody," The (Louisville) Courier-Journal.  
25 July 1908.

"Corner Stone Laid," The Louisville Times. 9 May 1906.

First Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Louisville Free Public  
Library. August 31, 1905.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2.2 Acres

**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

UTM REFERENCES

A | 1 | 6 | | 6 | 0 | 8 | 7 | 0 | 0 | | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 0 |  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
C | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

B | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
D | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

City of Louisville Block 29B Lots 45, 46, 47, 48.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Marty Poynter Hedgepeth

June 29, 1979

ORGANIZATION

Historic Landmarks and Preservation Districts Com.

DATE

502-587-3501

STREET & NUMBER

727 West Main Street

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Louisville

STATE

Kentucky

# 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

*Edward W. Shelton*

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

1-9-80

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Sally J. Shelton*

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

5/27/80

ATTEST:

*Kristin O. Council*

DATE

3/18/80

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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The only room of the interior which continues the Louis XVI style was the Delivery Room (now a foyer). This room is two stories in height with two staircases. The railings of the stairs are in bronze and iron with a circular motif which contains the monograph LL. The room has a barrel vault supported by engaged columns. The vault contains stained glass panels. The floor and trim are in white marble. The second story contains murals done in a neo-Renaissance style.

In 1969 an addition was made to the library and connected at the rear of the T. The new building is constructed primarily of textured concrete and glass and is harmonious in scale and rhythm with the older building. The new building in no way effects the appearance of the main facade. The new structure is richly landscaped with terraces and fountains.

For additional information see: Kentucky Survey of Historic Sites

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Library

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE

2

of New York, Pilcher and Tachau of New York, McKim, Mead and White of Boston, F.M. Andrews of Dayton and Mairain, Russell and Gardiner of St. Louis. The plans of Pilcher and Tachau were recommended by Ware and Hopkins and accepted by the committee.

The work on the library was begun in 1905 and not completed until 1908, due to strikes in the building trades. The library was formally opened June 25, 1908. One of the most popular and innovative features was the open stack room.

The main library of the Louisville Free Public Library is one of the most important cultural and educational institutions in Louisville for all ages. The library houses extensive periodical and research collections, leisure reading collections, an extensive children's program, an audio visual department and an FM Radio station. The major library service divisions are also housed in the building.

Lewis Pilcher, one of the architects of the building, was from Brooklyn and received his early training from the Columbia School of Architecture. He also served as the State Architect of New York and designed Sing-Sing Prison in that capacity. Pilcher was a professor of Fine Arts at Vassar, a professor of Architecture at Pennsylvania State University and the editor of Architecture for the Encyclopedia Americana.

William Tachau (d.1969), originally from Louisville, graduated from Columbia School of Architecture and was a classmate of Pilcher's. He also studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. The firm of Pilcher and Tachau was formed in 1900. The Haviland Building in New York, the band shell in Central Park, New York, the Squadron B Armory in Brooklyn, and the Church of Christ Scientists in Glen Falls, New York are a few of the buildings which they designed.

The Louisville Free Public Library is Louisville's finest example of the Beaux-Arts style and an excellent example of the harmonious blending of an older structure with contemporary architecture. The library is also an important educational and recreational resource and an important architectural element in downtown Louisville.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Louisville Free Public Library ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

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Second Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Louisville Free Public Library. August 31, 1906.

Third Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Louisville Free Public Library. August 31, 1907.

Hamlin, A.D.F. "The State Architect and His Works!" Architectural Record. V. 53, p. 26-43, 1923.

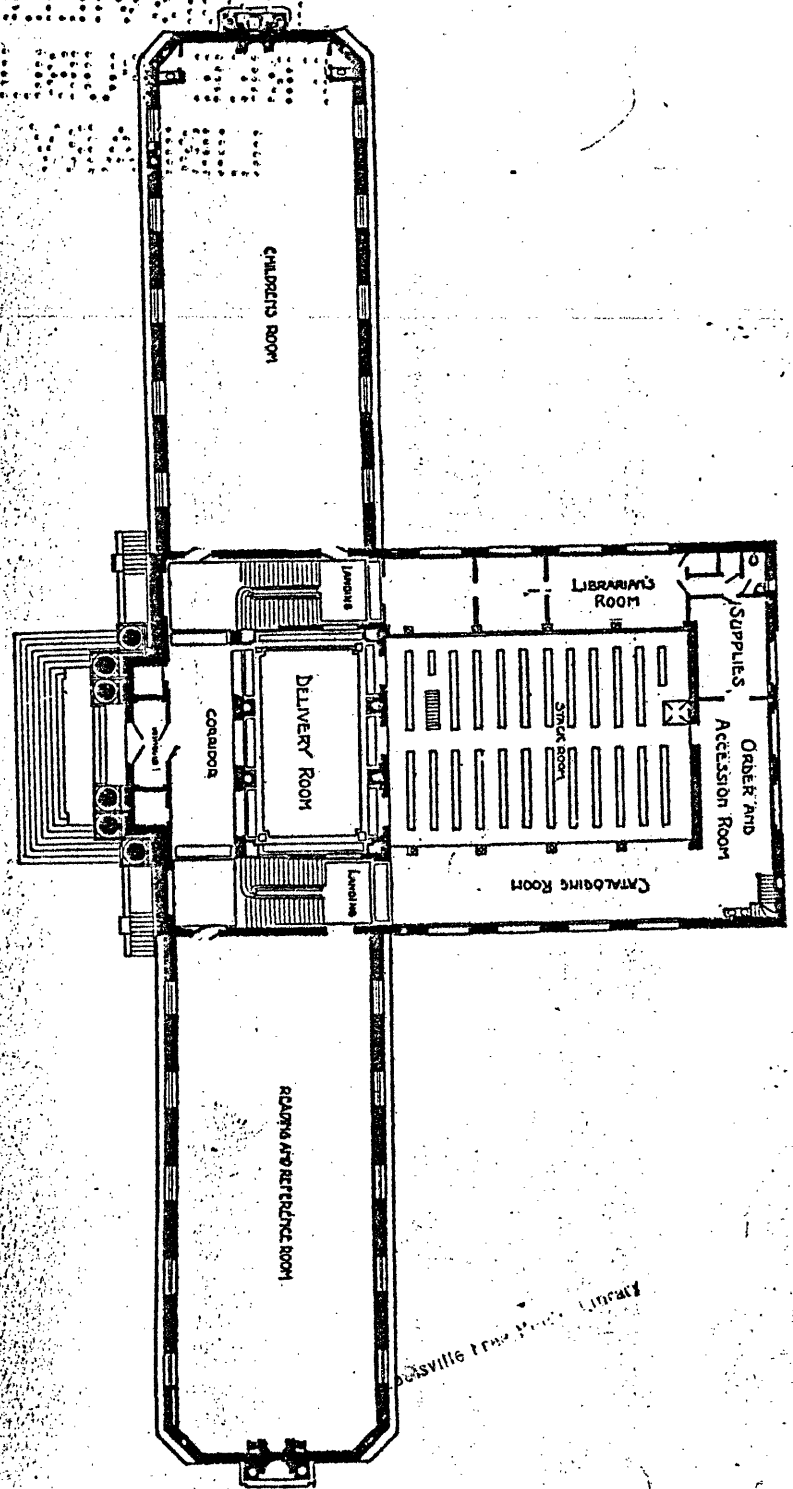
"Inspecting New Library." Evening Post. 25 July 1908.

"New Site!" The (Louisville) Courier-Journal. 30 January 1903.

New York Times. obituary L.E. Pilcher. 17 June 1941.

Workers in Service Division of WPA. Libraries and Lotteries. Cynthiana, Kentucky: Hobson Press, 1944.

APPENDIX C—Continued



Louisville Free Public Library

FIRST FLOOR  
LOUISVILLE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY



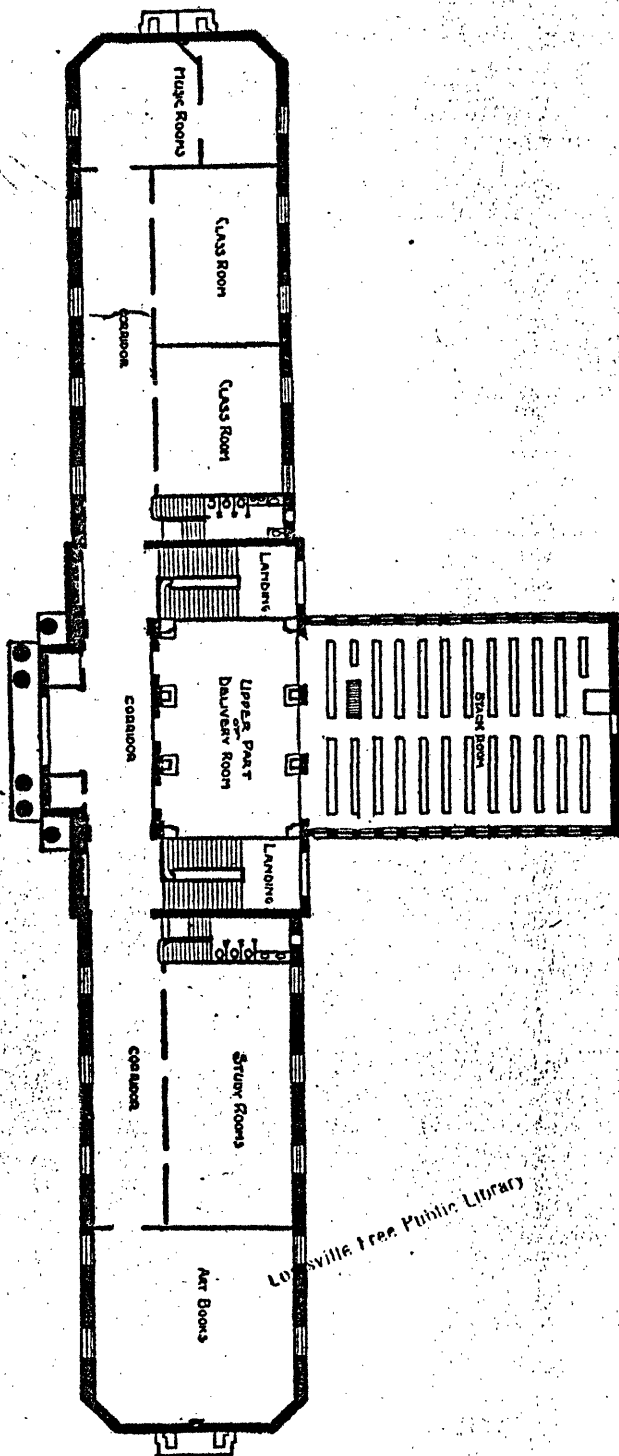
Louisville Free Public Library  
301 West York Street *cd.*  
Louisville, Jefferson, Ky.  
First Annual Report..of the  
Free Public Library

*49*  
Photo 7. Plan of first floor.

MAR 27 1980

JAN 29 1980

APPENDIX C—Continued



SECOND FLOOR  
LOUISVILLE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Louisville Free Public Library  
301 West Yor St. *Co.*  
Louisville, Jefferson, Ky.  
First Annual Report ...of the  
Free Public Library

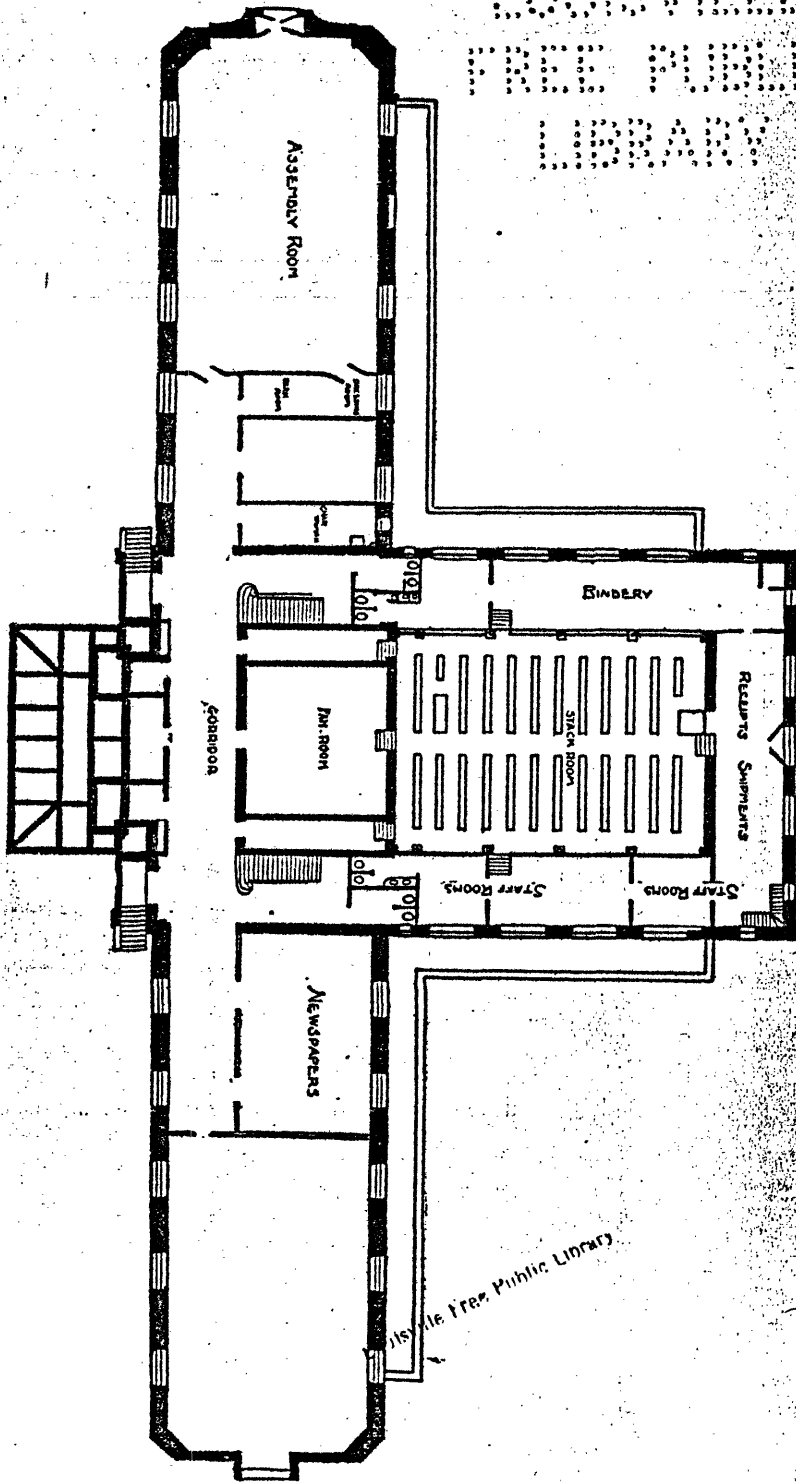
Photo 8.<sup>*of 9*</sup> Plan of second floor.

MAR 27 1980

JAN 29 1980

APPENDIX C

LOUISVILLE  
FREE PUBLIC  
LIBRARY



BASEMENT  
LOUISVILLE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Louisville. Free Public Library  
301 West York St.  
Louisville, Jefferson, Ky. *CO.*  
First Annual Report ...of the  
Free Public Library .

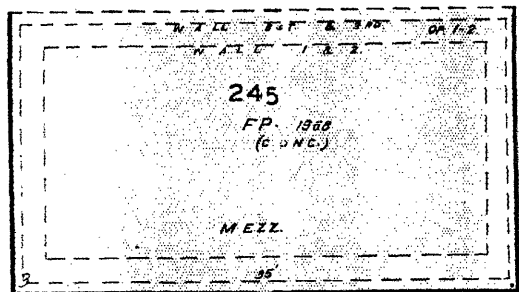
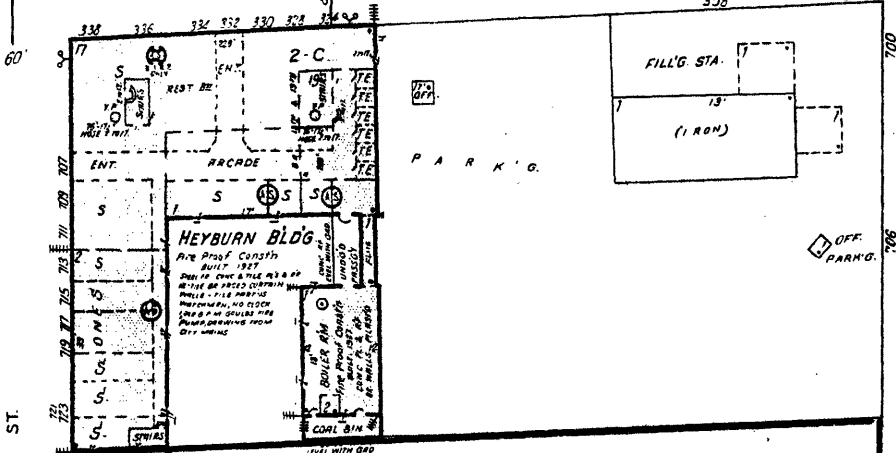
Photo 9. <sup>79</sup> Plan of basement.

MAR 27 1980

JAN 29 1980

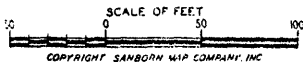
SEE VOLUME ONE

W. BROADWAY



LOUISVILLE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

HEAT: STEAM & HOT AIR DUCTS & BLINDS WITH MAIN CENTRAL 3RD FLOOR



MAR 27 1980

Louisville Free Public Library  
301 West York Street  
Louisville, Jefferson, Ky. *CL.*  
Sandborne Map Co. (1972)  
Philadelphia, Pa. Map 2. JAN 29 1980  
*4029*