

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

JAN 10 1989

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Southington Public Library
other names/site number Southington Historical Society

2. Location

street & number 239 Main Street not for publication N/A
city, town Southington vicinity N/A
state Connecticut code CT county Hartford code 003 zip code 06489

3. Classification

| | | | |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Ownership of Property | Category of Property | Number of Resources within Property | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | Contributing | Noncontributing |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local | <input type="checkbox"/> district | <u>1</u> | <u> </u> buildings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State | <input type="checkbox"/> site | <u> </u> | <u> </u> sites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal | <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <u> </u> | <u> </u> structures |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> object | <u> </u> | <u> </u> objects |
| | | <u>1</u> | <u> </u> Total |

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

[Signature] January 3, 1988
Signature of certifying official Date
Director, Connecticut Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): _____

[Signature] 2/9/89
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
EDUCATION/library

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
RECREATION AND CULTURE/Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)Neo-Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick
walls brick
roof asphalt
other limestone
terra cotta

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Southington Public Library is a Neo-Classical Revival building located at the northeast corner of Main Street and Marion Avenue in downtown Southington, with its original main entrance facing Main Street. It stands on a .37-acre lot in a commercial area comprised of converted 19th-century houses and 20th-century commercial and public buildings. The building ceased operation as a library in 1975. Since then it has been used as the headquarters for the Southington Historical Society. The new library stands across Meriden Avenue to the south.

Built of buff-colored brick with limestone and terra cotta trim, the library is a small one-story building with a low-pitched hip roof and a symmetrical, classical facade (Photograph 1). The original 46' x 26' portion of the building was erected in 1902 and was the design of New York City architect George Wilson Potter (1868-1936). A 43' x 26' addition, the Sylvia Bradley Memorial, extends across the rear of the building (Photographs 2-4). The addition, constructed in 1930 and designed by New Britain, Connecticut, architect Walter P. Crabtree, is consistent in style and materials with the original section of the library. Primary entrances to the library are located in shallow projecting pavilions on the west and south elevations (Photographs 1,3).

The library stands on a high brick-on-stone foundation with a limestone watertable capped by a terra cotta molding (Photographs 1-4). Recessed into the foundation at regular intervals are small square windows, many of which have crossed muntins.

The fenestration of the library is classical in design and, to some extent, reflects the intended function of the interior rooms. On the facade, two windows with molded eared surrounds of terra cotta pierce the wall surface on either side of a classical entryway (Photograph 1). Windows of this design also grace the south and east elevations of the Bradley Memorial (Photograph 4,5). Windows on the north elevation of the building's original section are one-over-one double-hung sash with casement windows above (Photograph 2). These tall windows lit the space between the bookstacks inside. The windows to the main reading room on the south elevation are simple one-over-one sash with projecting stringcourses marking the wall at the levels of the stone lintels and sills (Photograph 3). The windows on both the north and south elevation of the original section are slightly recessed, dividing the wall surface into a series of pilasters reminiscent of a Greek temple.

The main entrance to the library features a pedimented gable with a terra cotta raking cornice, brick frieze, terra cotta molded architrave, and two brick pilasters

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSouthington Public Library
Southington, ConnecticutSection number 7 Page 7.1

on either side of a recessed entryway (Photograph 6). Around the wide door is a terra cotta molded surround with water leaf and bead and reel designs and, above, a molded terra cotta architrave supported by two carved consoles with acanthus leaf designs. The entrance to the Sylvia Bradley Memorial is identical but for its double doors under a transom.

The terra cotta cornice and architrave of the entrances circumscribe the building except on the addition's north side, where the height of the tall narrow windows interrupts the architrave (Photograph 2). A skylight and a corbelled brick chimney pierce the asphalt-shingled roof of the original section.

On the interior, the rooms of the original section radiate around a circular central entrance hall, which features a domed ceiling with a round stained-glass skylight encircled by a cornice of polished oak (Photograph 7, Plan I). To the right of the entrance hall, and separated by a set of pocket doors, is the main reading room (Photograph 8). To the left is the book room, which housed the book stacks. Beyond this room is the librarian's office, which looks out upon the book room by means of a triple casement window in the wall (Photograph 9). The area at the end of the entrance hall appears to have been the location of the original stairway to the basement. It probably was removed when the Sylvia Bradley Memorial was added in the 1930s. Original woodwork is extant throughout the original rooms and includes molded oak window and door frames, chair rails, beam casings, crown moldings, and oak flooring (Photograph 8).

The south room of the addition, known as the "Historical Room," is embellished with Colonial Revival-style woodwork that is more elaborate than that found in the rest of the building (Photographs 10,11). Paneled wainscoting encircles the room, as does a heavy entablature featuring both dentils and modillions. A set of French doors leads to the south entrance vestibule, and above them is a large broken pediment with dentils supported by scroll brackets and pilasters. A corner cupboard stands in the room's northeast corner, and period light fixtures hang from the ceiling.

Various changes were made to the interior during renovations in the early 1960s (Plans I,II). A three-quarter height wall of glass and plasterboard was added across the width of the bookroom to create a small workroom, and the north walls of the entrance hall were removed. A set of stairs and a balcony were added in the north room of the addition, and the balcony was later expanded to a full floor. An entrance to the basement was built at the rear of the building, and some additional walls and paneling were installed in the basement to convert it to a children's area.

Despite these changes, the library overall has retained its basic plan and architectural features to a high degree. The exterior of the building, especially, has changed very little since construction of the Sylvia Bradley Memorial.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
Architecture

Period of Significance
1902-1938

Significant Dates
1902
1932

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Potter, George Wilson, Sr.
Crabtree, Walter P.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Southington Public Library is one of Southington's finest Neo-Classical Revival buildings, and is a good example of small town public library design from the turn of the century, a period of explosive growth in the number of public libraries built in towns and cities across the nation (Criterion C). It also holds a position of importance in Southington history as the town's first public library building, serving the community in that role for over seventy years.

Historical Background

Early efforts to form a circulating library in Southington met with limited success. The Union Library Society was organized in 1797, and its books were kept in the office of a Society member. By 1847 the library fell into disuse. Two other small private libraries formed in the mid-19th century, one at the First Congregational Church, run by the Sunday School, and the other a 369-book library at Cowles' Hall in Plantsville, operated by the Plantsville Library Association. The Association eventually distributed its meager holdings among the Plantsville School, the YMCA, and the local Sunday school.

Efforts revived in the 1890s. By 1896, a townwide resolution had been passed to establish a public library, and a library board of directors was appointed. Their work led to the creation of a small 1300-volume library in 1900 in the court room of the town hall.

Within a short time it became clear that a separate library with room to expand was required to meet the growing demands of the community. In response to a challenge donation by local businessman L.V. Walkley, the town raised \$5,000 for a new library building through a townwide special assessment. Walkley then bought the site at Main Street and Meriden Avenue and gave it to the town as part of his donation. Dedicated in May, 1902, the Southington Library cost \$10,000 and had a capacity of 6,000 volumes.

Through a bequest in honor of her mother from Emma Bradley Yoemans Newell, member of a prominent Southington family, the town built the Sylvia Bradley Memorial as an addition to the rear of the Southington Library. The south room of this addition, the Historical Room, was designed to house antiques and other objects given to the

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSouthington Public Library
Southington, ConnecticutSection number 8 Page 8.1

town by Mrs. Newell from her collection. The addition was dedicated on June 16, 1932.

The Southington Library served as the public library until 1975, when a new, larger library was opened across the street. Since then, it has continued to serve a community function as the headquarters of the Southington Historical Society and other local service organizations.

Architectural Significance

The resurgence in interest in classical architecture following Chicago's World Columbian Exposition in 1893 was reflected in countless public and commercial buildings designed in the Neo-Classical Revival Style over the ensuing decades. The style is characterized by the use of classical orders and detailing, a sparing application of ornament, and a formality that stood in sharp contrast to the more flamboyant and asymmetrical Late Victorian styles. The Southington Library, while lacking the typical monumentality of Neo-Classical Revival buildings, is a well-executed application of the style, giving the small building a formality and elegance appropriate for its purpose. The library's architectural significance is heightened by virtue of its being the best preserved example of the style in Southington.(1)

The library's design was the work of George Wilson Potter, Sr. (1868-1936), a New York City architect best known for his designs for schools throughout the eastern United States. Potter was employed in the offices of Richard Morris Hunt and William Van Brunt before starting his own practice, and commonly used the Neo-Classical Revival Style in his designs.(2) Potter's inspiration for the Southington Library was the Erectheum at Athens, a temple on the Acropolis in the Ionic style. This is most noticeable in the library's window and door moldings, which are very similar to those of the temple (Photographs 5,6). These and the library's other classical exterior features - its symmetry, raised foundation, pedimented entrance pavilion, entablature, and pilasters - combine to create the effect of a small Greek temple. Potter's original design called for a set of stone columns at the front entrance and a tiled roof, but these classical features were eliminated as a cost-cutting measure.

The Neo-Classical Revival Style is effectively continued in the Sylvia Bradley Memorial, designed by New Britain, Connecticut, architect Walter P. Crabtree (Photographs 2-4). Here the Ionic entrance pavilion and window details are repeated, with the addition of windows above and within the door displaying crossed muntins, a common characteristic of Crabtree's designs.(3) The overall effect is a building unified in design and style.

The library is also noteworthy as a good example of turn-of-the-century library design. As the rational planning of classical architecture began to replace the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSouthington Public Library
Southington, ConnecticutSection number 8 Page 8.2

picturesque Romanesque style as the preferred style in the design of libraries, a more functional type of library plan evolved. At the same time, Andrew Carnegie inaugurated, in 1897, his program of public library building grants, and a period of intense library building activity was launched throughout the country.(4) The Neo-Classical Revival was a favorite style for the Carnegie-funded libraries. It is no wonder that Southington decided to build a library at that time in this fashionable style.

Like the Southington library, the typical plan of the new small-town libraries of the Carnegie era was a small rectangle, with a group of rooms dominated by a grand entrance hall, often with a dome and skylight. A symmetrical facade with classical detailing was the norm, as was a raised foundation to allow large basement windows and a grand entrance stairway (Photograph 1). And like the Southington Library, small-town libraries in New England typically featured an entrance vestibule and two major rooms; one each to the right and left of the central entrance hall.(5)

The architectural integrity of the Southington Library is high and its features are well-maintained, marking the building as the finest Neo-Classical Revival structure in Southington and an important municipal historic resource.

End Notes

- (1) The historic resource survey of Southington identified only one other building, the Town Hall Annex at 91-93 Main Street, designed in the Neo-Classical Revival Style. Several alterations have been made to its exterior.
- (2) Potter's other works in Connecticut include the Bristol Public Library, the Bristol High School, the United Bank Building in New Milford, and the Broad Street School in New London. (See American Architect, February 1937, p. 140)
- (3) Crabtree was also skilled in the Neo-Classical Revival style: examples of his works include the Bristol Trust Company building, the Suffield Savings Bank, and the First National Bank in Plainville, Connecticut. (See American Architect, March 2, 1910, and September 25, 1918)
- (4) Approximately 1900 public library buildings in the United States and Canada were built with Carnegie grants between 1897 and 1923. (See Wheeler and Githens, below.)
- (5) Joseph L. Wheeler and Alfred Morton Githens, The American Public Library Building (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), pp. 8, 222-223.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Timlow, Heman R. Ecclesiastical and Other Sketches of Southington, Connecticut.
Hartford: Case, Lockwood and Brainard Company, 1875.

Southington Public Library, historical records collection. Library scrapbook
containing news clippings, notes, and renovation plans, c. 1901-present.

Wheeler, Joseph L., and Githens, Alfred Morton. The American Public Library Building. New
York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A
 preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)
has been requested
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings
Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Southington Public Library

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .37 acre

UTM References

A

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|---|---|---|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 9 | 6 | 0 |
| Zone | | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | |

B

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|--|--|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | |

C

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|--|--|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | |

D

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|--|--|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | |

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is described in the land records of the
Town of Southington, Vol. 46, page 60.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the full parcel of land containing the original
Southington Public Library building and is the same as that granted
to the Town of Southington by Lucius V. Walkley in 1901.

See continuation sheet

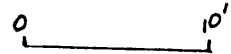
11. Form Prepared By Reviewed by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

name/title Janice Elliott and Gregory Andrews/Consultants
organization _____ date May 1, 1988
street & number c/o Andrews, 1643 Boulevard telephone 561-3841
city or town West Hartford, state CT zip code 06107

SOUTHINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
 Southington, Connecticut

PLAN I - First Floor Plan
 Approximate Scale:

Additions: c. 1932  c. 1961 



② ↘

④ ↓

③ ↙

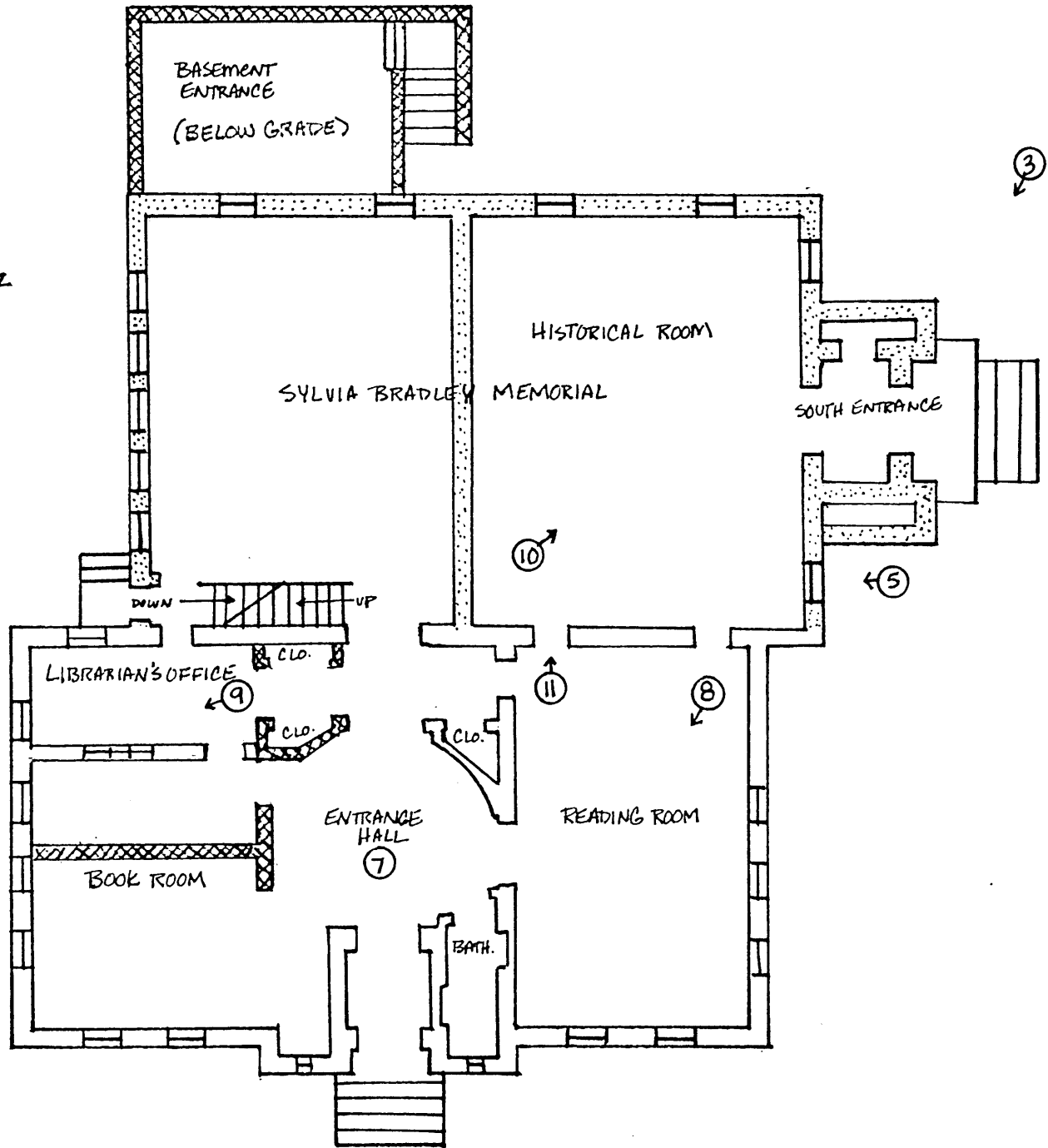


PHOTO KEY # ↗
 DIMENSIONS NOT EXACT

① ↑
 ⑥ ↑

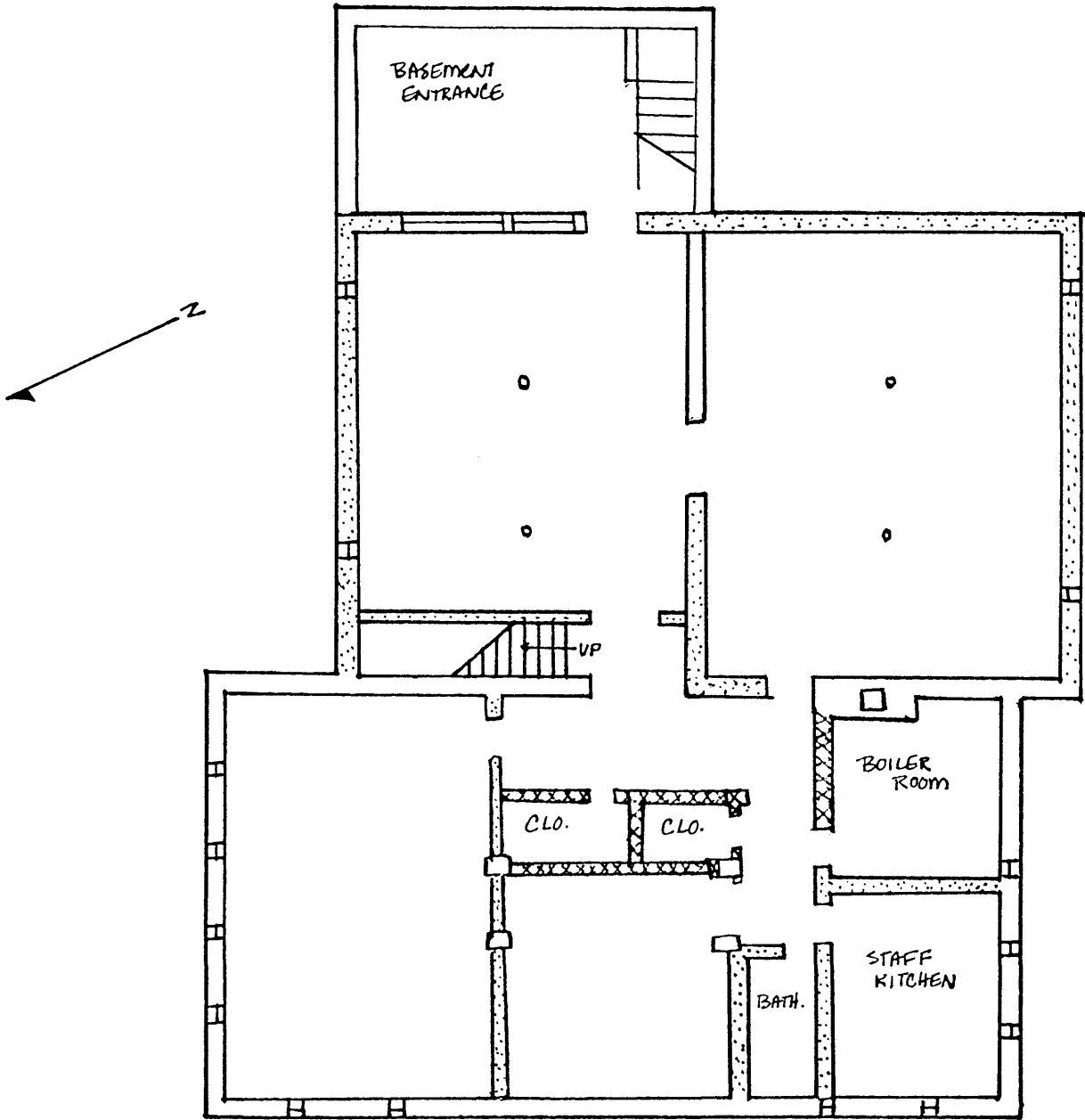
J. Elliott

SOUTHINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
Southington, Connecticut

PLAN II - Basement Plan
Approximate Scale:



Additions: c. 1932  c. 1961 



DIMENSIONS NOT EXACT

J. Elliott

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Southington Public Library
Southington, Connecticut

Section number Photos Page 1

Photographs

All photographs are of the Southington Public Library, 239 Main Street, Southington, Connecticut, and were taken by Janice L. Elliott in March, 1988, unless otherwise noted. Negatives for all photographs are on file with the Connecticut Historical Commission.

| <u>Number</u> | <u>Description</u> | <u>View</u> |
|---------------|--|-------------|
| 1 | Facade (west elevation). | East |
| 2 | North elevation. | Southwest |
| 3 | South elevation. | Northwest |
| 4 | East elevation. | West |
| 5 | Detail - window. | North |
| 6 | Detail - front entrance. | East |
| 7 | Dome in entrance hall. | Up |
| 8 | Former Main reading room. | Northwest |
| 9 | Librarian's office. | North |
| 10 | Historical room, Sylvia Bradley Memorial (addition). | East |
| 11 | Detail - door between main reading room and addition. | East |