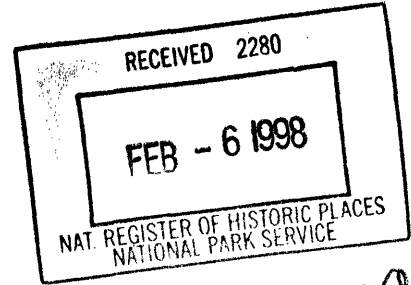


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

## A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Branch Buildings, Providence Public Library, Providence, RI 1926-1932

## B. Associated Historic Contexts

Historic & Architectural Resources of Providence (RI), 1636-present

## C. Geographical Data

Incorporated limits of City of Providence, Providence County, Rhode Island

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet

## D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

Frederick C. Williams  
Signature of certifying official

1/29/98  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Edson H. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper of the National Register  
*beall*

3-5-98  
Date

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**E. Statement of Historic Contexts**

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See continuation sheet

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**F. Associated Property Types**

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See continuation sheet

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**G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

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See continuation sheet

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**H. Major Bibliographical References**

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See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

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

Specify repository: Providence Public Library

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**I. Form Prepared By**

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Name/Title: Jean Douglas

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: April, 1997

Street & Number: 79 Rumstick Road Telephone: 401-245-1804

City or Town: Barrington State: RI Zip: 02806

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### Statement of Historic Contexts

Previously submitted.

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### Associated Property Types

I. Name of Property Type Educational Buildings (Branch Buildings, Providence Public Library, 1926-1932)

#### II. Description

This property type includes buildings constructed as branch libraries in the early 20th century. All are red brick buildings whose designs reflect the Colonial Revival.

The branches designed by Howe were:

...Colonial in inspiration: all essentially one-story, three-part interiors, with reading rooms and open shelving to either side of a central space devoted to circulation and librarians' offices (supplemented by work space in a raised basement where each also had a community meeting room). All contained chunky chimneys at either end, continuing the nineteenth-century tradition of open hearths in rural and small town library reading rooms. These were mostly fire-less by the 1920s, symbolic rather than functional, but even as symbols providing a focus to the rooms and a sense of domestic welcome. The buildings were to have a friendly mien, but with dignity as a public monument as well. On both scores, Howe's efforts succeeded.<sup>1</sup>

The first branch library constructed was the Wanskuck Branch at 245 Veazie Street. Completed in 1928 from plans drawn by Howe, this Colonial Revival Harvard-brick building with limestone trim features a five bay

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<sup>1</sup>William H. Jordy, Christopher P. Monkhouse, et al., Buildings on Paper, Rhode Island Architectural Drawings 1825-1945 (Providence, RI: Bell Gallery, List Art Center, Brown University; The Rhode Island Historical Society; and Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 1982), p. 84.

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facade with a pedimented front porch, large chimneys at each end of the gable slate roof, dentil cornice, and brick quoins at the corners.

Two years after completion of the Wanskuck Branch, the Providence Public Library constructed a branch in South Providence at 441 Prairie Avenue. Wallis Howe altered his original design by turning the gable end to the street to fit the narrow building site. Like the Wanskuck Branch, the South Providence Branch is a one-story Colonial Revival building constructed of Harvard brick with limestone trim. Tall, arched windows flank the mass of the chimney on the street elevations.

In 1930 Howe created a second variation of his design with the Rochambeau Branch, 708 Hope Street. Like the two previous buildings, this branch is a Colonial Revival building constructed of Harvard brick with limestone trim. Howe incorporated a cross gable roof which has end pavilions with gable ends toward the street; large palladian windows punctuate the front and rear of both pavilions. The front entrance lies within a one-story Federal Revival porch.

Designed by prominent Providence architect Albert Harkness, the Smith Hill Branch at 31 Candace Street was completed in 1932. The Colonial Revival style building is constructed of Harvard-brick with limestone trim. Harkness modified the revival design by incorporating Moderne elements on the interior.

The four structures are related to one another in their adherence to the characteristics of the Colonial Revival style. The scale of the buildings is uniform; all are well proportioned. The individual structures are symmetrical compositions with moderately pitched slate roofs. All are constructed of red brick, offset with limestone trim, and feature multipaned windows. The buildings are adorned with Colonial Revival decorative elements applied in varying degrees. Decorative motifs include dentil cornices, quoins, pilasters, columns, balustrades, and entrances emphasized with pediments and projecting porticoes.

Branch library interior organization focused on efficiency. A small vestibule with two doors opening into the main floor allowed for two reading rooms on each side of the central hall/delivery area. The circulation desk was located close to the entrance, and placed so that the librarian could supervise activity on the principal floor. On each side of

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the central area bookshelves with glass partitions above provided noise reduction for reading-room patrons.

The tripartite interior division of space in these four buildings was typical of this period of branch library design. This configuration provided separate reading rooms for children and adults. Once a controversial issue, children's rooms had become standard in library administration as had the open stack system included in all four plans. Fireplaces (non-functioning) were used as prominent decorative features.

All four PPL branch library buildings incorporated large community meeting rooms in the basement for activities such as Americanization classes, English classes, lectures, and club meetings. Also included in the plans were conference rooms, storage space, and the heating plant. Basements were raised and usually featured the same fenestration pattern as the main floor insuring maximum natural light.

Ideas for small library plans were compiled and published in 1910 by James Bertram, Andrew Carnegie's personal secretary. Notes on Library Building was intended as a general guide to library design for Carnegie grant applicants. Six plans were suggested, all rectangular with a raised basement. Larger libraries could be constructed by adding a small stack room at the rear about one-third the size of the core, resulting in a T-plan. Bertram promoted the open-plan library, with its centrally located charging desk and flanking reading rooms, as the ideal for small public libraries. In the 1920s many communities, including Providence, financed their own library buildings, hiring architects to design small, symmetrical, classically detailed libraries with open plans.

### III. Significance

The four historic branch library buildings of the Providence Public Library (PPL), Providence, RI, represent a resource which is significant architecturally and as a lasting reminder of some broader patterns of local history. The branch libraries are important documents in the history of the development of library services in Providence, especially the decentralization of services and the integration of libraries with other social service agencies. In addition, the branch libraries played a special role in the history of Providence as an immigrant community.

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The four branch libraries of the Providence Public Library (PPL) constructed between 1926 and 1932 represent an important architectural resource. Built in the Colonial Revival style, these architect designed branches represent a specialized building type. In 1926 the Providence Public Library (PPL) engaged Wallis E. Howe, principal in the prestigious Providence firm of Clarke & Howe, to produce a prototype for ten "regional" branch buildings to be built in the neighborhoods of Providence. His selection of the Colonial Revival style as an overall theme reflects the tremendous popularity of the style for public buildings throughout the early part of the twentieth century. Howe's plans were intended to be used for all ten branch libraries. However, only four of the ten were built, three designed by Wallis Howe (Wanskuck, South Providence, and Rochambeau) and the fourth (Smith Hill) by Albert Harkness. Harkness also designed his branch in the Colonial Revival style "which might be termed the normative style of the time, especially in a Colonial saturated environment like Rhode Island."<sup>2</sup>

The history of public library development in the United States has been examined by a number of authors. In addition, a few multiple property National Register nominations which specifically address the building campaigns funded by steel magnate Andrew Carnegie have been prepared by states including Maine (Maine Public Libraries ca.1750-1938), Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska and Washington. A brief overview of national and regional trends will be useful to repeat here as an introduction to a closer review of the particular patterns that shaped the evolution of the Providence Public Library.

The year 1876, when the first permanent organization of librarians was formed, is commonly taken as the starting point of the modern library movement. The American Library Association (ALA) was founded by public and university librarians and became the voice of trained professionals through its monthly publication, the Library Journal. Its pages conveyed the questions that confronted the profession: the library's role in society,

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<sup>2</sup>William H. Jordy, Christopher P. Monkhouse, et al., Buildings on Paper, Rhode Island Architectural Drawings 1825-1945 (Providence, RI: Bell Gallery, List Art Center, Brown University; The Rhode Island Historical Society; and Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 1982), p. 31.

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the make-up of its collections, technical aspects such as book conservation, and the design of library buildings, which was one of the longest running and most heated debates.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, philanthropy played a major role in the wide geographic distribution of public libraries. Pittsburgh steel magnate Andrew Carnegie was the person most often associated with this method of donation. From 1886 to 1917 Carnegie awarded money to all states except Rhode Island and Delaware. Carnegie's example was repeated throughout the nation by local residents who had achieved financial success and wished to bestow some measure of it on their native towns, most often in the form of memorials to family members.

Carnegie would give a library to any town of at least one thousand people. Recipients were required to provide a site and to tax themselves at an annual rate of 10% of the total gift in order to maintain the building, buy books, and pay the library staff. This assured Carnegie that the recipients were willing to do their part in supporting the library. These requirements may account for the lack of a Carnegie grant to the PPL. Early in its history, a proposition for a municipal free library was decisively rejected by the Providence electorate, which would indicate a lack of enthusiasm for the annual tax called for by Carnegie. By the time the PPL began a branch building campaign in 1926, Carnegie grants were no longer available.

The first public branch library opened in Boston in 1870 in two rooms on the second floor of a schoolhouse.<sup>3</sup> Two factors fostered the proliferation of branches - convenience in delivery of services and local identification of service programs. By 1890 the trend toward branch libraries was well established and aided by the program of Carnegie grants which encouraged branch library building. The typical methods of expanding library services were the branch library, the sub-branch, and the delivery station. The branch library had its own stock of books and periodicals with the privilege of drawing on the stock of the central library; it was operated by its own staff and maintained a fairly extensive schedule of hours. The sub-branch was smaller than a branch, having fewer books, a

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<sup>3</sup>Walter Muir Whitehall, Boston Public Library, A centennial History (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 85.



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more limited schedule, and staff with duties at several locations. The delivery station was established when an employee from the central library regularly visited a school or settlement house and issued books from a stock of a few hundred volumes. By creating branch library services, the public library evolved into a sort of community agency, close to the people it served and in a strong working relationship with the neighborhood.

During the early part of this century branches were usually located in rented rooms in city halls, school buildings, banks, or in conjunction with other civic buildings. Widespread use of neighborhood branches reflected the library's move from a predominately conservational function to the broader role of advancing popular education. Branches proved to be very successful, but their rented quarters were often small, ill-equipped rooms. The need to construct buildings designed specifically for branch library use became necessary as rising circulation severely strained cramped quarters.

Architects and librarians grappled with the ideal plan for a branch library which embodied a new type of architecture in both concept and design. This specialized building type integrated in one structure all the branch library's needs which included reference area, reading rooms for both adults and children, and large community rooms. Branch library plans were included in Notes on Library Building published in 1910 by James Bertram, Andrew Carnegie's personal secretary. These drawings were intended to provide a general guide to library design for those seeking Carnegie grants. However, the basic plan and tripartite division of space presented by Bertram became the hallmark of branch and small library building plans. These plans codified the latest innovations in bringing books and readers together, including the once controversial ideas of reading rooms for children and open stacks for reference.

The history and development of the Providence Public Library generally follow the national pattern described above, although it differs from most American public libraries in being privately governed and supported. In 1871 a charter was granted by the Rhode Island General Assembly for a Free Public Library, Art Museum, and a Museum of Natural History in Providence to be housed in a "stately edifice" with rooms "devoted to the uses of

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scientific and literary societies."<sup>4</sup> However, this proposition for a municipal free library was presented to the Providence electorate and decisively rejected at the polls.

A new charter, granted in 1875, eliminated the art gallery and museum. On February 4, 1878 the PPL was formally opened to the public in a leased room in the Butler Exchange. The PPL was organized as a separate institution with no connection to the city government beyond the fact that the mayor would be an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees.<sup>5</sup> The PPL was a private corporation with its chief source of funding from endowments. Throughout its history, appropriations to the PPL from the City of Providence varied. Until 1899 support from the city ranged from \$7,500 to \$11,000 per year. In 1900 the yearly allocation was increased to \$20,000. This figure reached \$63,000 by the time the Smith Hill Branch was completed in 1932; this figure represented approximately 20% of PPL's revenue for that year.

William E. Foster, a Brown University graduate, was chosen by the Trustees to be the first Librarian of the PPL. He went on to serve in that capacity for 53 years, until 1930. Foster's broad vision of the library stressed "contact," which essentially involved "pushing out the walls of the library and making contacts with schools and colleges, museums, foreign groups, local industries, hospitals, with the blind and individual readers interested in self education."<sup>6</sup> Meeting this goal, the First Annual Report of the PPL in 1879 reported that the library is "used by white and black, Jew and Christian, Catholic and Protestant, male and female, young

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<sup>4</sup>Zachariah Allen et al, Free Public Library, Art Gallery, and Museum in the City of Providence, RI (Providence, RI: Hammond, Angell & Co., 1871), p.3.

<sup>5</sup>Sidney Ditzion, Arsenals of a Democratic Culture: A Social History of the American Public Library Movement in New England and the Middle Atlantic States From 1850 to 1900 (Chicago: American Library Association, 1947), p.47.

<sup>6</sup>Stuart C. Sherman, The First Ninety Years of the Providence Public Library 1878-1968 (Providence: Privately printed, 1968), p.8.

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and old; and is in short, what it was intended to be, a library for the whole people."<sup>7</sup>

As circulation increased, the need for a central library building became imperative. In 1893 the Board of Trustees acquired five lots bounded by Washington, Greene, and Fountain Streets and in 1900 opened spacious new quarters designed by Stone, Carpenter & Willson. Soon after the central library was completed, the PPL began to establish neighborhood branches, since a central location was unable to adequately serve the city's growing population. By the turn of the century Providence, fueled by the growing immigrant population, was expanding in size and population.

Waves of foreign workers faced staggering problems of adjustment, and the public library attempted to meet the demands of the swelling urban population with services offered at branches, sub-branches, and deposit stations throughout the city.

While the public library was not principally a charitable institution, it naturally gravitated into cooperation with such institutions. In some instances branches or sub-branches gradually developed from what initially was a deposit sent to a social service agency. A supplement to the public school system and an instrument of general education, the library also established a close cooperative relationship with the public schools. The first branch opened in 1906, when the PPL took over a library begun by the Mt. Pleasant Working Girl's Association in 1903. In 1910 the PPL reopened the Wanskuck Library, which had been operated for mill workers. This was followed in 1911 by a branch associated with the North End Working Girl's Association in a room rented from the YWCA. A room at the Rochambeau Avenue School was established as the Elodie Farnum Memorial Library in 1915. The library continued to expand into city neighborhoods along with schools, fire stations, and churches. Branches were very well received, and by 1926 the PPL was operating seven neighborhood branches, four sub-branches, and nine stations. Of these, one branch, three sub-branches, and seven stations existed in school buildings.

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<sup>7</sup>First Annual Report of the Providence Public Library, 1879,  
p.9.

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On the eve of the library's fiftieth anniversary, two studies completed in 1926 revealed that not one of the seven branches (which circulated 46% of total circulation) was adequately housed, and the central library had been entirely outgrown.<sup>8</sup> At that time Providence probably had the poorest branch system of any city its size in the country.<sup>9</sup> The PPL owned one separate branch building, Sprague House, and desperately needed permanent, well-equipped branch buildings. In addition, the central library was over twenty years old and lacked adequate space for book storage and patrons.

These studies pointed to a building program as the solution. Plans were drawn for an extensive addition to the central library building. However, after serious consideration, the library's Board of Trustees voted that the extension of the library's work should be through a city-wide system of ten branches and that Wanskuck should receive first attention. This ambitious plan was an important step for the library, since it represented a substantial outlay of capital. In keeping with William Foster's vision, this plan represented a commitment to maintain contact with all segments of the diverse urban population.

The development of the branch library system correlated with the growth of the foreign-born population in Providence, following periods of heavy immigration. Drawn by the opportunity to work in the mills, immigrants from eastern Europe, Ireland, Canada, Italy, and Portugal settled in Providence. By 1925 the population reached an all-time high of 268,000. When the Trustees approved a city-wide branch building campaign in 1926, there were ten wards in Providence. The four branches erected during the six years between 1926 and 1932 served three wards characterized by ethnic diversity: Ward 2 (Rochambeau), Ward 3 (Smith Hill and Wanskuck), and Ward 6 (South Providence). The 1925 RI Census indicated that approximately 45% of the total 70,694 foreign-born in Providence were not naturalized.

Decentralization of library services was the natural progression of the public library movement, providing greater accessibility and wider

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<sup>8</sup>Sherman, The First Ninety Years of the Providence Public Library, p.11.

<sup>9</sup>Sherman, The Providence Public Library, An Experiment in Enlightenment, p.39.

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opportunity for usefulness in addressing Americanization and naturalization issues. The PPL was an effective educational institution, offering immigrants not only books, but meeting rooms, book collections in foreign languages, classes in English, U.S. history, government, and culture, assistance in obtaining naturalization papers, and naturalization classes.

In the early twentieth century, integration of the library with the community developed in response to the needs of the people living and working nearby. The library promoted both socialization and individualization, offering opportunities for continuing education when previously such opportunities were limited. On one hand it transmitted the social heritage and inculcated the values and experiences of the past into the group, with a unifying effect; on the other, it enabled the individual to appraise present trends and future values, enhanced the quality of his personal life, and provided a means for climbing the social ladder.<sup>10</sup> Responding to social change, the library became less the product of a stable society and more of a stabilizing influence in a shifting society. Rather than being a technician or custodian, the librarian became more of a teacher, materially assisting the foreign-born in becoming American citizens.

By making the transition from a passive to an active institution, the library became a powerful force in acculturating and educating immigrants. Candidates for citizenship were encouraged to enroll in classes which were held frequently at the branches: to help people learn to speak, read, and write the English language, to be instructed in the fundamental principles of democracy, and to understand the rights and duties of American citizens. Americanization was a major concern in the early twentieth century, and the public library was "a vital educational agency, no less significant in training for citizenship than the schools and universities-rather one with them in this objective."<sup>11</sup> The PPL was respected as an Americanization

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<sup>10</sup>Martin Lowell, "The American Public Library as a Social Institution," in American Library Philosophy, ed. Barbara McCrimmon (Hamden, CT: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1975) p.95.

<sup>11</sup>Ernestine Rose, The Public Library in American Life (NY: Columbia University Press, 1954), p.9.

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agency; it had "for years, under rare direction, ranked foremost among such institutions."<sup>12</sup> Integrating diverse groups in a common educational setting, the PPL helped to nurture the skills and knowledge of democratic citizenship and promote mutual understanding and respect. The PPL's work was "characterized by absolute efficiency, no condescension, and no acrimonious campaigns."<sup>13</sup>

The initiative of branch library construction may be linked to several trends including humanitarian ideals of universal education, the rising sense of nationalism after World War I, and the desire to promote Americanization and naturalization. After World War I three pieces of legislation set immigration quotas and underscored the desire for the acculturation and assimilation of immigrants. In 1921 the Johnson Act curtailed immigration of a given nationality to not more than 3% of immigrants from that nation residing in the U.S. in 1910. Three years later the National Origins Act restricted immigration to 2% of each nationality residing in the U.S. in 1890, further limiting southern and eastern Europeans since fewer lived in the U.S. in 1890 than in 1910. The National Origins Act was amended in 1927 fixing a limit of 150,000 immigrants a year, including 65,721 from Great Britain, 25,957 from Germany, but only 5,802 from Italy and 2,712 from Russia. Immigrants from southern and eastern Europe represented a fair share of Providence's diverse population who had access to a variety of programs through the PPL's branch network.

The rise of neighborhood branches paralleled the construction of schools, churches, and fire stations throughout Providence neighborhoods. The proximity of PPL branches to other public buildings constructed during the same time period is evident on maps from the 1937 Plat Book of the City of Providence. Foster's vision of "contact" was one of the components in the placement of the branches. In an address on the occasion of the PPL's fiftieth anniversary he explained: "The map of the city has been studied with great diligence, with a view to covering the whole area in a systematic way; and, although the urgent needs thus revealed have not by

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<sup>12</sup>Providence Journal, 28 December 1920.

<sup>13</sup>Providence Journal, 28 December 1920.

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any means been thoroughly met, all that is necessary is a financial equipment adequate to supplying these needs."<sup>14</sup>

When the plan to create a city-wide system of branches was approved by the Board of Trustees in 1926, ten buildings were projected - seven to replace existing branches housed in totally inadequate quarters and three to serve sections of Providence which were not receiving library services. Architect Wallis E. Howe, principal in the Providence firm of Clark and Howe, was commissioned to design a prototype for the branch libraries. Howe's use of Colonial Revival for the proposed branches reflected the enormous popularity of the style for public buildings. Its appeal to patriotic and nationalistic sentiments also made Colonial Revival a natural choice as the physical expression of the American national identity which was fostered by the library's work with the immigrant population.

The Colonial Revival style created a visual metaphor of distinctive American nationality. Immigration had been dramatically changing America's demographic patterns. The Colonial Revival style "carried comforting associations for descendants of colonial settlers now threatened by massive Eastern and Southern European immigrations, with allegedly more secure times when English-speaking Protestants were in full control of all the American colonies."<sup>15</sup> The style proclaimed, more assertively than ever before, the virtues of the United States' distinctive principles of government. By the 1920s it was a poor American community that had not acquired a dignified Colonial Revival courthouse, post office or library.

The PPL Trustees authorized the construction of the Wanskuck Branch (1926-28) at 245 Veazie Street. This was the first branch designed specifically for that purpose and built with the library's own funds. By 1927 the \$33,000 allocated by the city was estimated to be a per capita charge of only thirteen cents, against an average figure elsewhere of one

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<sup>14</sup>William E. Foster, Address on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Providence Public Library, February 1928.

<sup>15</sup>Alan Gowans, Styles and Types of North American Architecture, Social Function and Cultural Expression (NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), p.235.

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dollar.<sup>16</sup> The PPL Board of Trustees appealed to the city council for an increase in funding. The City of Providence recognized the needs of the library and increased its annual appropriation to the PPL by \$10,000 for each branch constructed; by 1932 the city's allocation grew to \$63,000.

Two more branches designed by Wallis Howe were built: South Providence (1929-30) at 441 Prairie Avenue and Rochambeau (1930) at 708 Hope Street. Albert Harkness designed the Smith Hill Branch (1932) at 31 Candace Street. The completion of the Smith Hill Branch in 1932 marked the termination of all expansion and extension activities until 1948 when Albert Harkness designed the Mount Pleasant Branch of the PPL. The influence of the Depression was felt in full force,<sup>17</sup> and the 1926-1932 building campaign was over.

#### IV. Registration Requirements

The four branch libraries of the PPL constructed between 1926 and 1932 are significant under two criteria on the local level. A branch is significant under Criterion A for its role in the history of education Providence and in the history of the development of library services. The branch libraries are also significant for their association with the development of immigrant communities in the City of Providence. A PPL branch library is significant under Criterion C for its expression of a distinctive style of architecture and as a good representative example of its particular style in the community.

Although the PPL offered reading materials through branches, sub-branches, and delivery stations beginning in 1906, these were the first permanent structures to house branch libraries. With reading rooms for adults and children, activities such as Americanization, naturalization, and English classes, lectures and readings, the branch libraries represented a major addition to a neighborhood's educational and cultural life and provided opportunities that may not have offered until that time.

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<sup>16</sup>Providence Journal, 8 August 1923.

<sup>17</sup>Sherman, Experiment in Enlightenment, p. 47.



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PPL historic branch libraries embody the spirit of local efforts to establish and maintain the library as a key element in the educational and cultural life of the ethnic community.

As Providence grew and population increased, the central library branched out to reach neighborhoods where immigrant communities were clustered. This initiative may be linked to trends including the desire to promote Americanization and naturalization, social reform and ideals of universal education, and a rising sense of nationalism. Construction of buildings designed specifically for branch libraries began when circulation severely overtaxed cramped rented quarters and finances permitted. Undertaking a branch-building campaign was an ambitious step for the library and reflected William Foster's vision of maintaining contact with all segments of Providence's diverse population. Branch buildings were a physical manifestation of the importance of a free public library to a community's educational and cultural development. Decentralization of library services provided greater accessibility for the immigrant population and provided a strong institutional presence in the neighborhoods. For these reasons the public branch library building stands as an important reminder of one aspect in the broader patterns of history that shaped the City of Providence.

These buildings have further significance as important architectural resources in their design, scale and setting. Each of the structures is an expression of the radical change in library philosophy which brought books and readers together through the open plan, and is a strong statement of the Colonial Revival public building reflected in form, materials, and details. The individual buildings are good examples of this early twentieth century revival style, and collectively they reinforce the Colonial Revival theme through a repetition of common characteristics. Public buildings were frequently designed in this style during the early twentieth century, particularly in the east where Colonial traditions were strongly evident.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>William B. Rhoads, "The Colonial Revival and American Nationalism," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 35 (December 1976): 239-254

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For the PPL's branch library buildings to be eligible within this context, they must first meet the significance requirements outlined above. That is, a branch must be significant under Criterion A for representing an important aspect of community life in Providence and contributing to public education and under Criterion C as a good representative example of the Colonial Revival style.

Secondly, properties must meet integrity requirements to be considered eligible. They must remain in the place where they were during their important association (location and setting), and must retain sufficient historical appearance to recall that association (design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association). This would include essential physical features such as exterior finishes, materials, and floorplan. Architecturally important, they reflect the interpretation of a popular building style by architects of local significance.

In general, to be eligible for the Register, a PPL branch library must retain sufficient integrity to illustrate in physical form its significance. Integrity of location is required for all eligible properties of this type. Examples of this type will be considered sufficiently well preserved to meet the registration requirements if they retain in their exterior form, materials, and design their original appearance. Minor alterations to the exterior and interior are to be expected, but an eligible branch library will retain its identifying characteristics. Eligible branch libraries will retain substantial integrity in the organization of interior space.

The public branch library is a specifically designed building type that reflects its unique use. For this reason the integrity of its main floorplan is as significant as the retention of its exterior characteristics, including original fenestration patterns and architectural details. Retaining the interior arrangement of space is especially important when it is remembered that the organization of this space was the focus of debate between librarians and architects for some time. It is expected that the original arrangement of space will be preserved by the dividers of bookcases and glass and wood partitions or the bookcases alone. However, it is expected that some interior alterations will have taken place in eligible branches. In the process of maintenance the branches may have experienced such changes as window replacement, new heating systems, fluorescent interior lighting, and security measures such as window grilles

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and metal doors. Such alterations will be documented, but will not necessarily exclude a branch library from listing. All branch libraries will continue to serve in their original capacity. It is expected that even while adapting to newer library technology, the branch library will have retained architectural integrity and identity.

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### Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Previously submitted.

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