

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0687847

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	NOV 15 1978
DATE ENTERED	JAN 12 1979

**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 Napoleon Street Branch of the New Orleans Public Library

AND/OR COMMON  
Napoleon Street Branch Library

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER Napoleon Street

CITY, TOWN

New Orleans

--- VICINITY OF

--- NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2nd - Lindy Boggs

STATE

Louisiana

CODE

22

COUNTY

Orleans Parish

CODE

071

**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:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME New Orleans Public Library

STREET & NUMBER  
219 Loyola Avenue

CITY, TOWN

New Orleans

--- VICINITY OF

STATE

Louisiana

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Civil Courts Building

STREET & NUMBER  
421 Loyola

CITY, TOWN

New Orleans

STATE

Louisiana

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Napoleon Street Branch Library is set in an urban residential neighborhood of New Orleans. Because the Library is surrounded by a parking lot, the boundaries of the nominated area include only the building.

The Library is approached by means of a central front stoop which leads to an open rectangular library space with windows on all four sides. To the rear of the Library space is a block of rooms which contains an office, three bathrooms, and a stair leading to the cellar.

The building is constructed with bearing walls of brick. The floor and the flat roof rest upon wood beams which are approximately 10 inches on center.

The building, with its heavy proportions and sparse ornamentation, is a low-key example of early 20th century eclectic architecture. The exterior features Flemish bonded brickwork with a limestone water table, cornice, coins, and front stoop. The massive paneled entrance door is surmounted by a limestone hood with an entablature which rests upon consoles. At one time the stoop was flanked with lamp posts. The large single light sash windows are original as are the interior oak paneled doors and shelves.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" 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 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 1908

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Favrot and Livaudais

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Due to its close relationship to the surrounding neighborhood and particularly to the locality's educational institutions, the Napoleon Street Branch Library can claim historical significance in two areas--social/humanitarian and education.

In 1903 Dr. James H. Dillard of the Board of Directors of the New Orleans Public Library met with philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in New York and secured a pledge of \$250,000 for new library buildings in New Orleans. Plans were soon made for construction of a Central Library and three branches. In the autumn of 1904, the City Council approved the use of the lower side of Lawrence Square as the site of the "uptown" branch. The square already contained three important components of the neighborhood--the McDonogh No. 6 School, the Jefferson City Market, and the Seventh Precinct (now Second District) Police Station--and thus it seemed an obvious choice for the library site. City Librarian Henry M. Gill noted the advantages of the site, which like the "downtown" Royal Street branch, was located "on the edge of an exceedingly busy commercial and shopping section and directly opposite a pretty public square."<sup>1</sup>

In November, 1905, the Library Board chose, from a total of fifteen applicants, the firm of Favrot and Livaudais as the architects of the Napoleon Street branch. The Board accepted and the City Council approved the bid of Michel Chessi and Company, which offered to do the construction work for the sum of \$15,820. This amount was later raised to \$16,696.16 due to several unforeseen problems. Total cost of the building including architect's fee, construction costs, equipment, and books was \$26,560. The library was dedicated on January 31, 1908. Miss Eleanor Kopman was the first librarian. Today it is one of two remaining Carnegie endowed libraries still in use in the city. In addition, it is the only one whose architectural integrity is still intact.<sup>2</sup>

Through seventy years of operation the Napoleon Street Branch of the New Orleans Public Library has enjoyed a close relationship with the uptown community that it serves. This relationship is reflected in its record of services to the neighborhood in general and to the educational institutions of the area in particular.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

City of New Orleans, City Engineer, Correspondence, 1907, City Archives, New Orleans Public Library.

City of New Orleans, Comptroller, Annual Report, 1907, City Archives.  
(continued)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

UTM REFERENCES

880								
A	1 5	7 7 9 8 6 0	3 3 1 3 3 9 0	B				
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	
C				D				

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary encompasses the exterior walls of the building.

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

Staff of New Orleans Public Library

ORGANIZATION

DATE

August 25, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

219 Loyola Avenue

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

New Orleans

Louisiana

# 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.

SIGNATURE

*Bernard Lamar*

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

11 Oct 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 11/26/79  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

*William L. ...*

DATE

1/5/79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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The philosophy of the branch within the New Orleans library system was expressed in 1910 as follows:

The great advantage a small branch has is the strong feeling of friendliness that soon spring (sic) up between the borrower and the library force. The success and growth of the branch depends more upon the creation and maintenance of this feeling than upon any other cause.<sup>3</sup>

One measure of the branch staff's successful work is found in its circulation statistics. From an initial figure of 27,914 in 1908 the Napoleon Branch circulation increased through the 1920's. By the end of that decade Napoleon had outdistanced all of the other branches in this statistical category. Circulation began to decline thereafter as new libraries were opened in the uptown area. Today Napoleon is classed as a neighborhood branch and has the second largest circulation of all branches in this category.<sup>4</sup>

Other less easily measured aspects of library service have been given attention by the Napoleon staff. In 1912 it was noted that a particular effort was being made to encourage in-house reading at the branch.<sup>5</sup> A rather unusual service was given to the neighborhood during the summer of 1939. Two staff members were assigned to deliver new library cards to inactive patrons. This enabled them to determine the reasons why the patrons had lapsed in their use of the branch and to correct noted deficiencies where possible. The project also supplied the library staff with an approximation of the extent of migration out of the neighborhood.<sup>6</sup>

That the efforts of the branch staff were appreciated is indicated by the many instances in which patrons reciprocated by loaning materials for display or by volunteering their services. In November, 1939, for example, patrons loaned Guatemalan harvest dolls, Mexican pottery, and a collection of Chinese blown glass fruit. At the present time the volunteer staff actually outnumbers the paid staff.<sup>8</sup>

The educational institutions of the neighborhood have been especially close to the Napoleon Branch. McDonogh No. 6, which shared the square of ground with the library from 1908 through the mid-1920's was, however, a black school and thus had no direct relationship with the then segregated library.<sup>9</sup> Around the year 1925 the school building was transformed into the Joseph Kohn Girls' High School of Commerce. Students of this institution made extensive use of the branch despite the completeness of their school library.<sup>10</sup> When the school's closing was announced in November, 1948, the branch librarian noted that "we have enjoyed close cooperation with the school and are sorry to see it close."<sup>11</sup>

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Other neighborhood schools noted the importance of the library to their students. The principal of Sophie B. Wright High School in 1912 advised that the Napoleon Branch would:

...cooperate with that of the school in providing books for the pupils, and at the same time requested lists of books that would tend to promote this design. The lists have been forwarded, and the aid thus promised will be of incalculable benefit to the school.<sup>12</sup>

An interesting partnership existed between the library and near-by Thomas Jefferson School during the early 1950's. The school principal travelled during the summer vacation and mailed letters back to the Napoleon Branch to be copied and mailed to his students. Included in these letters were encouragements to the children to read and use the library during the summer months.<sup>13</sup> For her cooperation in this program the branch librarian was awarded the Thomas Jefferson Award in 1953.<sup>14</sup>

In 1963 the neighborhood parochial school, St. Stephen's, was

...contacted to help promote circulation and several of the Sisters assigned groups of children to come to the library and get 'classroom collections' of books. This seems to have stimulated interest in books and reading, and makes the books accessible even to those children who can't, or won't, come to the library on their own.<sup>15</sup>

Pupils from all of the area schools were allowed to use the library in groups before regular hours so as not to conflict with other patrons. For many years story hours were held every Saturday for the children of the neighborhood.<sup>16</sup>

The Napoleon Branch was so successful in dealing with children that in later years parents who had been brought up reading at the branch brought their children back there to read despite the fact that they had long since moved to other parts of town.<sup>17</sup> In the words of the branch librarian:

Our neighborhood sends their children to us and we are deeply appreciative of the trust and responsibility given us.<sup>18</sup>

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A final anecdote concerning the history of the Napoleon Street Branch Library comes from its "Annual Narrative Report" for 1963:

In November and December, representatives of various organizations and news media descended upon the branch. Lee Harvey Oswald, the believed assassin of President Kennedy, had checked out books from the branch during the summer and early fall of 1963, and the F.B.I.'s book-by-book search of the collection revealed thirty-three titles, many of which contained subject matter apparently relevant to the case. The type of books Mr. Oswald had taken merited interest by the New York Times, Time magazine, various regional newspapers, local TV, a national television documentary film, etc.

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FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>New Orleans Public Library (hereinafter abbreviated as NOPL), Minutes of the Board of Directors, January 15, 1903 and September 6, 1904, City Archives, NOPL; City Council, Ordinance No. 3025 NCS (May 2, 1905), City Archives, NOPL; NOPL, Annual Report, 1907, pp. 15-16; E. Robinson (comp.), Atlas of the City of New Orleans, La. (New York, 1883); Sanborn Map Company, Insurance Maps of New Orleans, La., Vol. 5 (1909).

<sup>2</sup>NOPL, Minutes of the Board of Directors, November 29, 1905, September 4, 1906, and February 2, 1907; City Archives, NOPL; City Council, Ordinance No. 4233 NCS (December 4, 1906) and Ordinance No. 4460 (February 26, 1907), City Archives, NOPL; Comptroller, Annual Report, 1907, City Archives, NOPL; City Engineer, Correspondence, April 10 and 25, 1907, City Archives, NOPL; NOPL, Annual Report, 1908, p. 15, 18, 20; New Orleans Daily Picayune, February 1, 1908, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>NOPL, Annual Report, 1910, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>NOPL, Annual Reports, 1908 - 1976; NOPL, Annual Statistical Reports, 1958 - 1977.

<sup>5</sup>NOPL, Annual Report, 1912, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup>NOPL, Napoleon Branch, Narrative Report, August, 1939.

<sup>7</sup>NOPL, Napoleon Branch, Narrative Report, November, 1939.

<sup>8</sup>NOPL, Keynotes, May 29, 1978, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup>New Orleans Public Schools, Annual Report, 1908 - 1920.

<sup>10</sup>NOPL, Napoleon Branch, Narrative Report, May, 1939.

<sup>11</sup>NOPL, Napoleon Branch, Narrative Report, November, 1948.

<sup>12</sup>New Orleans Public Schools, Annual Report, 1912.

<sup>13</sup>New Orleans Times Picayune, August 5, 1951, section 2, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup>New Orleans Times Picayune, April 12, 1953, section 2, p. 6.

<sup>15</sup>NOPL, Napoleon Branch Annual Narrative Report, 1963.

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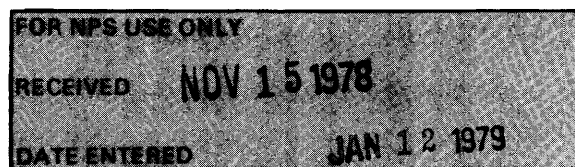
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- <sup>16</sup>NOPL, Napoleon Branch, Narrative Reports, January - December, 1939.
- <sup>17</sup>NOPL, Napoleon Branch, Annual Narrative Report, 1955.
- <sup>18</sup>NOPL, Napoleon Branch, 1939.

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New Orleans City Council, Ordinances No. 3025 NCS (May 2, 1905), No. 4233 NCS (December 4, 1906), and No. 4460 (February 26, 1907), City Archives.

New Orleans Daily Picayune, February 1, 1908.

New Orleans Public Library, Annual Reports.

New Orleans Public Library, Annual Statistical Reports.

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