

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Continuation sheet

Item number 8

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13. Wilshire Branch Library  
149 N. Saint Andrews Place

Significance:

The Wilshire Branch Library is significant for design and cultural reasons as one of the largest branch facilities built with the funds provided through the 1925 bond referendum; as an excellent example of regional design from the 1920's era; and as one of a handful of public/institutional buildings designed by the architect Allen Kelly Ruoff, a prominent local architect during the 1920s known primarily for his residential design work.

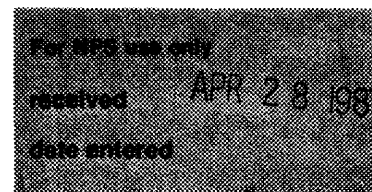
The Wilshire Branch Library was completed in 1927, and officially dedicated at a ceremony on August 1, 1927 where Everett R. Perry, Head Librarian and administrator of the Los Angeles Library System, and Orra E. Monnette, president of the Library Board, officiated. As one of the largest and more costly branch facilities, the library enjoyed a showcase status, a photograph of it serving as a kind of frontispiece for Everett Perry's 1928 Hand Book of the Branch Libraries. The completion of this facility also represented the last phase of a vigorous campaign on the part of the Library Board to expand public service through construction of branch libraries between 1911 and 1926. As such, the completion of the Wilshire Library is the architectural embodiment of a phase of local and national history when public libraries served an even greater public education role than they do today. This importance is suggested by both the liberal policy of the Andrew Carnegie Foundation in funding library construction, and by the overwhelming support in Los Angeles expressed in the passage of several bond issues to fund library expansion.

In architectural terms, the Wilshire Branch Library is an excellent example of its style (Italian Romanesque Revival), and reflects the popularity of Mediterranean inspired architecture during the 1920s and 1930s in Southern California. The library is also a precise translation of library design guidelines developed by the library for its branch facilities by the mid 1920s: separate adult and children's reading rooms; provision for expansion of the collection; a patio area for outdoor reading during the warmer summer months; appropriate staff facilities; a centralized circulation desk; and a small meeting room for community use. The building fulfills these requirements while being thoughtfully adapted to its small site. The library is also noteworthy for the masterful way in which it plays formal design notions associated with public structures against informality of treatment--a result probably expressing both the Library Board's and the architect's objective of giving the building a formal character appropriate to the scale and tone of the adjoining buildings in its residential setting.

The architect, Allen Kelly Ruoff (1894-1945) came into prominence locally during the mid-1920s as a designer of homes, many of them in the popular Mediterranean-revival styles of the era. Henry F. Withey's Biographical Dictionary of American Architects discusses Ruoff, specifically mentioning the Wilshire Branch Library as one of the architect's major non-residential works. Ruoff is also listed in Who's Who in Los Angeles (1924), a further indication of his professional and social standing. Among the architect's residential work the Walter P. Story House, and the E. T. Williams House

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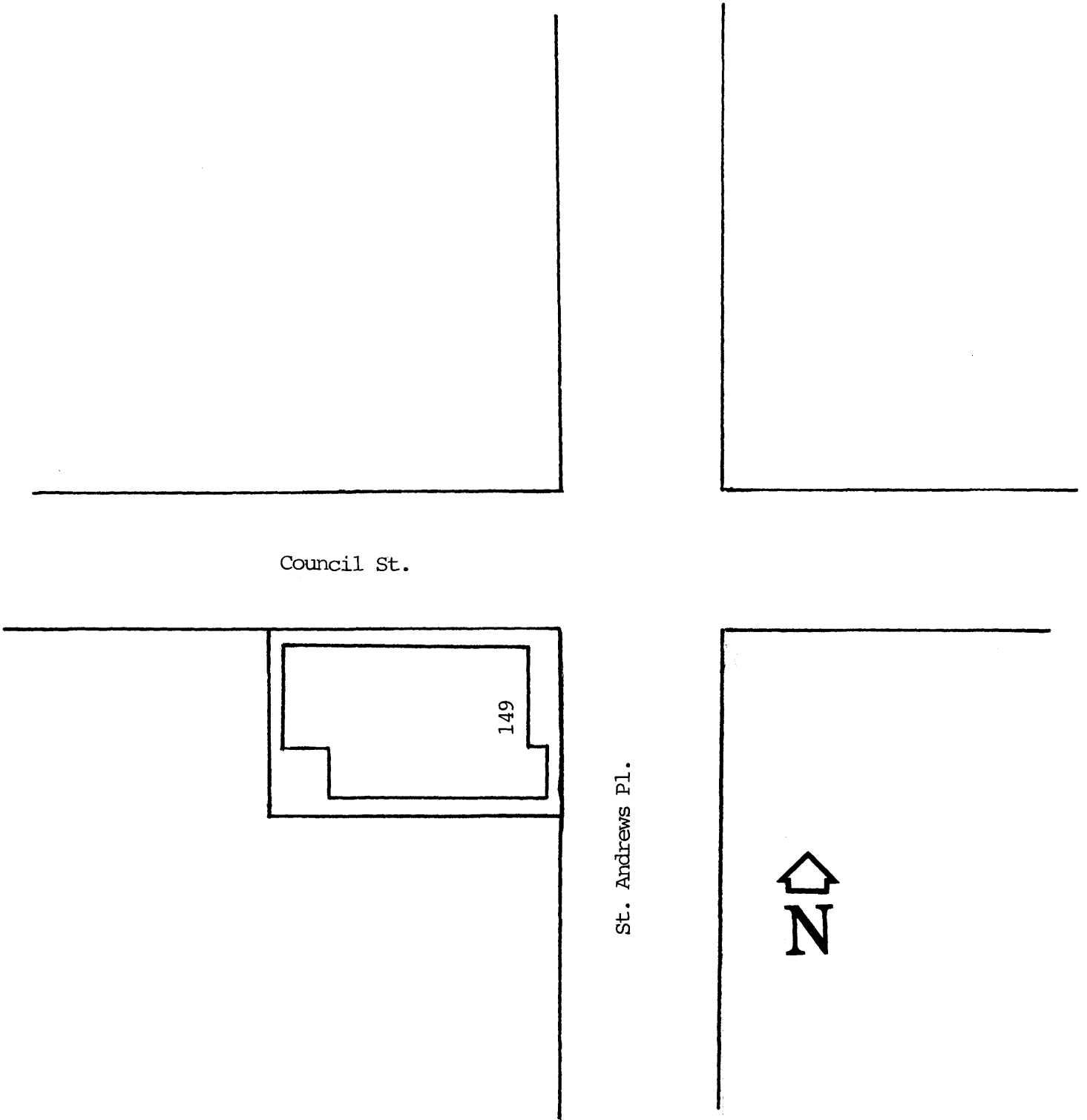
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(done in partnership with A. C. Munson) received national attention through their publication in the Architectural Digest. Ruoff also wrote articles on residential design for the Los Angeles Times.

As an important cultural and social institution of the Mid-Wilshire area, the Wilshire Branch Library stands as one of the fine examples of public architecture in Los Angeles.

APR 1 1985

BRANCH LIBRARIES, LOS ANGELES, CA  
#13 Wilshire Branch, 149 N. St.  
Andrews Pl. 1 inch=60 feet



Council St.

St. Andrews Pl.

149

