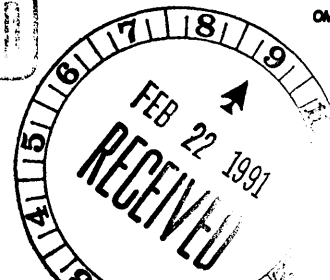


United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

FEB 22 1991



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES Registration Form

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 18). 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 Howard Memorial Library other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 615 Howard Ave. city, town New Orleans state Louisiana code LA county Orleans code 071 zip code 70130

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: [X] private, [] public-local, [] public-State, [] public-Federal. Category of Property: [X] building(s), [] district, [] site, [] structure, [] object. Number of Resources within Property: Contributing 1, Noncontributing 0 buildings, 0 sites, 0 structures, 0 objects, Total 1. 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 [X] 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 [X] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. [] See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: Leslie P. Tassin, LA State Historic Preservation Officer, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism. Date: February 20, 1991. 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: [X] 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:). Entered in the National Register. Signature of the Keeper: [Signature]. Date of Action: 3/22/91.

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/library

COMMERCE/TRADE-business

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Richardsonian Romanesque

foundation brickwalls sandstoneroof tileother granite

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Richardsonian Romanesque Howard Memorial Library was begun in 1887 and dedicated on March 3, 1889. It is constructed of sandstone quarried in Massachusetts. The library is located on a very tightly packed block on Lee Circle on the edge of the New Orleans Central Business District. It is extremely well preserved due to a recent painstaking restoration. The principal exception is the book room interior, and plans are underway for its restoration.

Unlike the typical Richardsonian library, the Howard does not have a spacious setting. In fact, the buildings on the block in question are so close together that the rear elevation of the library is almost completely obscured. This should not be regarded as a fundamental change in setting because the block already had buildings on it when construction began, although not the current ones. Shortly after the library's completion, the Howard family had the present Confederate Memorial Library built in a similar style around the corner to the rear. In a way the library was doomed because there was no room for expansion. A landscaping feature certainly worthy of note is the matching sandstone retaining wall defining the minimal front lawn and a small planting area. The steps ascend either side of the semicircular planting area.

In true Richardsonian Romanesque fashion, the Howard has a massive, solid appearance. Factors contributing to this overall quality of heaviness include the use of rock-faced stone; the building's decidedly horizontal lines; minimal, deeply recessed windows; squat towers; and short, thick columns defining the windows. Unlike many other Richardsonian buildings, the Howard does not have a contrasting stone highlighting structural elements such as lintels and arches. Except for the granite string course, everything is of a reddish brown sandstone. This monochromy also contributes to the building's sense of massiveness. The tile roof is in a similar color.

The exterior of the Howard reflects the standard Richardsonian tripartite library design -- reading room, entry room, and book room. The off-center entry room is marked by a large gable and a squat, polygonal staircase tower. To the west the walls curve to accommodate a circular reading room. To the east of the entrance is the rectilinear book room with its pair of squat round towers.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Howard Memorial Library, New Orleans, Orleans Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 1

Typical Richardsonian Romanesque features include:

- (1) rock-faced masonry
- (2) a massive, heavy character
- (3) the use of squat towers
- (4) minimal, deeply recessed windows (many like arrow slits)
- (5) a great round arch marking a cavernous opening (in this case without columns or piers for support)
- (6) a grouping of three round arch windows in the front gable
- (7) short, thick columns grouped in twos and threes to separate and define windows
- (8) the use of voussoirs outlined by a heavy molding to emphasize the round arches
- (9) steep, gabled, parapeted wall dormers (in this case to provide illumination for the reading room). The richly detailed dormers feature a large window with a transom and above that a decorative arrow slit.
- (10) the use of intricate floral and interlacing carvings. Major examples include the column capitals, an intertwined emblem in the peak of the gable, the seal of New Orleans dedicatory tablet over the entrance, a band of carving defining the inner edge of the round entrance arch, and a fascinating stone carving on the entrance arch. The intricate design shows a wolf-looking creature with a chained collar inscribed with the word "ignorance." (The first five letters are visible.)

The great reading room would be the interior piece de resistance even if the impressive book room survived intact. The circular room is forty feet high and forty feet in diameter. The focus of the room is a huge gray sandstone hooded fireplace set on axis with the end of the book room. Its chief glory, however, is an elaborate oak hammerbeam ceiling whose beams curve upward to form a peak. When viewed from directly below the beams merge in an elaborate radial pattern. The sixteen hammerbeams jut dramatically into the room, each terminating with a carved creature resembling a wolf. Each "wolf" is different. The walls of the reading room are paneled in oak at the level below the ceiling braces. The floors are also of oak.

All that survives of the book room is the recently restored hammerbeam ceiling, also with wolf-like creatures, each one different. Fortunately, an historic photo survives to document this space, which will be restored completely to its original appearance. The entry room is completely paneled and has a flat beamed ceiling. Above the entry room, reached via a staircase set in the polygonal tower, is the trustees' room.

CONTINUED

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Howard Memorial Library, New Orleans, LA
Section number 7 Page 2

The 1989-1990 Restoration (Barron and Toups Architects, New Orleans)

The Howard ceased to be a library in 1939 and received numerous alterations over the years, in addition to having suffered some fire damage in 1945. When the present owner, Taylor Energy Company, acquired the property, the book room had been completely obliterated except for the hammerbeam ceiling. The ceiling was restored, with about 10% of it having to be reproduced.

The reading room, fortunately, had suffered mainly cosmetic alterations. A concrete floor was removed to reveal the original oak flooring (about 30% of which had to be replicated). The paneling had been abused, and about 70% of it had to be replicated. The magnificent hammerbeam ceiling had been painted and was stripped. The massive stone fireplace had been moved to the entry room and painted over. It was re-erected in its original location and cleaned. (The fireplace consists of 104 blocks of sandstone weighing a total of 6,150 pounds.)

Other major components of the restoration included having to replicate most of the paneling in the entry room, removing vines that had taken over the exterior, cleaning the exterior and repointing where necessary, lowering the lawn level to once again expose the granite string course, and repairing, and in some cases replacing, windows that had been filled in or covered over. The State Fire Marshall required that two front doors be provided instead of the original window and door. The doors were based on a photo showing the original and a study of doors in Richardsonian libraries.

The principal restoration work remaining to be done includes the restoration of the book room, the removal of a non-historic wing abutting the adjacent Confederate Memorial Hall, and the replication of the original dedicatory plaques above the entrance which bore the name of the library, etc. They were removed in the 1970s to make room for three windows. The only one to survive is the seal of New Orleans plaque mentioned previously.

It should be emphasized that the recent and ongoing restoration work is exemplary in every respect. Great care was taken to make sure everything was done exactly right, and modern conveniences were installed in the most sensitive manner possible.

CONTINUED

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Howard Memorial Library, New Orleans, LA

Section number 7 Page 3

Assessment of Integrity:

The principal source of the Howard's significance is its monumental Richardsonian Romanesque exterior, which looks almost exactly as it did the day the building was dedicated. The only alterations at the present time are the windows above the entrance and the wing abutting Confederate Memorial Hall. The windows have a minimal visual impact and will soon be removed and the dedicatory plaques replicated. The wing will soon be demolished and the stonework repaired. In any event, it does not affect the principal view of the Howard and is of the same sandstone and tile.

Of course, the most serious overall loss is the book room, which is critical to the Howard's identity as a library but not as an example of the Richardsonian Romanesque style. Plans are currently underway to restore it as well.

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 NA

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

architecture

Period of Significance

1887-1889

Significant Dates

1887-1889

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

H. H. Richardson/Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge (see below)
Contractors: Norcross Bros., Boston
Stone masons: Evans & Toomb, Boston

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

The Howard Memorial Library is of state significance in the area of architecture because of its textbook Richardsonian Romanesque exterior and its equally impressive reading room. The Howard is one of very few examples of the Richardsonian Romanesque style in Louisiana. Among these, it has the most impressive pedigree, being based on a design by Richardson's firm and executed by his successor firm, Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge. (The complex authorship is explained in detail below.) Additionally, the magnificent reading room is one of the most unusual late-nineteenth century interiors in Louisiana.

The Richardsonian Romanesque style is regarded as one of relatively few distinctively American contributions to nineteenth century architectural history. In this it stands with the Chicago skyscraper style and the Shingle style. Richardsonian Romanesque was quite popular, becoming in many ways the hallmark of public architecture in late nineteenth century America. But the style never made much of an impact in the Deep South and even less in Louisiana. While one finds elements of the style in a building here and there (usually round arches), there are only eight buildings in the state that could rightly be regarded as Richardsonian Romanesque, all located in New Orleans.

The Howard is the only one of these to have any connection with the master himself, Henry Hobson Richardson. Although the extant blueprints for the building bear the name of Richardson's successor firm, Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, the Howard is actually a revised and enlarged version of the design prepared by Richardson's office for the Hoyt Memorial Library in East Saginaw, Michigan. The competition, which Richardson did not win, occurred in February/March 1886, not long before he died on April 27. Although Richardson was quite ill at the time, a surviving letter to his assistant Shepley dated March 6, 1886 reveals that he was very much involved in the project.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Ferguson, John. "The Howard Memorial Library: Renaissance of a Masterpiece" and "The Howard Memorial Library: Decline and Resurrection." Preservation-in-Print, Preservation Resource Center, New Orleans, October and December 1989.

Personal communication with John Ferguson, Senior Architectural Historian, New Orleans Historic District Landmarks Commission.

Ochsner, Jeffrey Karl. H. H. Richardson: Complete Architectural Works. Cambridge, Mass., 1982.

O'Gorman, James F. H. H. Richardson and his Office: Selected Drawings. Cambridge, Mass., 1974.

Blueprints, Howard Memorial Library, Southeastern Architectural Archive, Tulane University.

See continuation sheet

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State historic preservation office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acree of property less than one acre

UTM References

A

1	5	7	8	2	7	0	0	3	3	1	5	8	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Boundary lines follow the property lines of the parcel of land upon which the library stands. Please refer to enclosed plat map.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Boundary lines follow the property lines of the parcel of land upon which the library stands. Please refer to enclosed plat map.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title National Register Staff
organization Division of Historic Preservation date October 1990
street & number P. O. Box 44247 telephone 504-342-8160
city or town Baton Rouge state LA zip code 70804

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Howard Memorial Library, New Orleans, Orleans Parish, LA

Section number 8 Page 1

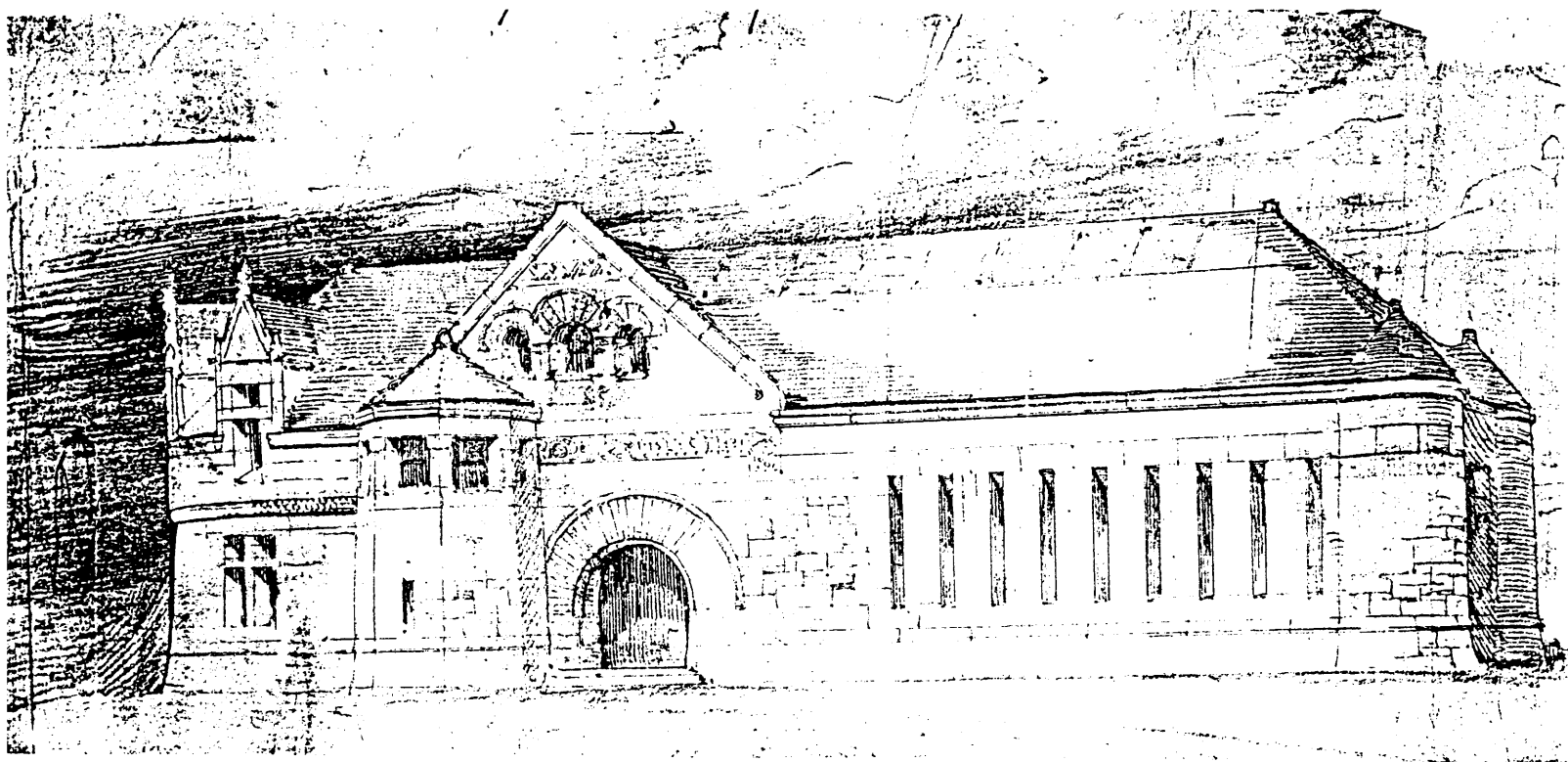
It seems quite clear that the rejected Hoyt design was used a bit later by Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge for the Howard Memorial Library. (See enclosed Hoyt drawing.) The exterior articulation is the same except for a virtual doubling in size, different fenestration on the book room, and a different color scheme. (The specifications called for rock-face limestone trimmed with red sandstone.)

One cannot leave the subject of the authorship of the Howard without mentioning the H. H. Richardson monogram carved above the pilaster between the entrance doors. The reason for it is sheer speculation, but perhaps it was Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge acknowledging their use of the rejected Hoyt design.

Another component of the Howard's architectural significance is the glorious reading room, which is easily among the most impressive late nineteenth century interior spaces in the state. One hesitates to use the overworked word "unique," but there is certainly nothing like it in Louisiana. Where else could one find a grandly scaled circular room complete with a massive hooded fireplace and an intricate dome-like hammerbeam ceiling with carved wolves?

Historical Note:

The Howard Memorial Library honors Charles T. Howard, the president of the legendary Louisiana State Lottery. Howard died May 31, 1885. Annie Howard Parrott purchased the property November 30, 1886, and the library project was announced in the local papers on January 30, 1887. Construction began in 1887, and the library was dedicated March 3, 1889. The contractor was Norcross Brothers, a Boston firm responsible for executing much of Richardson's work. The Boston firm of Evans and Toombs, also a Richardson favorite, did the stonework.



Hoyt Library Proposal
H. H. Richardson
(see statement of significance)