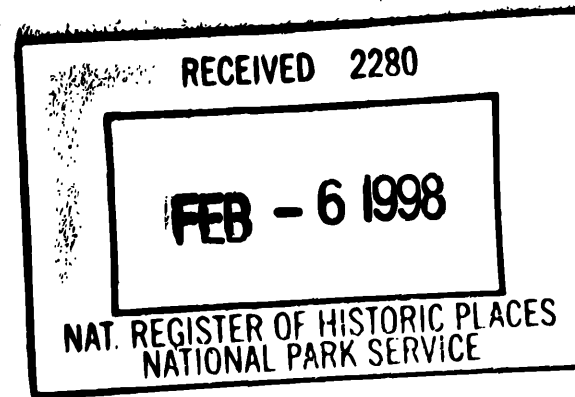


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

## 1. Name of Property

historic name: Rochambeau Branch, Providence Public Library

other name/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Location

street & number: 708 Hope Street

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Providence vicinity: N/A

state: RI county: Providence code: 007 zip code: 02906

## 3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: Branch Buildings, Providence Public Library, Providence, RI, 1926-1932

Property name Rochambeau Branch, Prov. Public Library, Providence Cty., RI

**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.

Frederick Williamson

1/29/98

Signature of certifying official

Date

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):

Edson H. Beall

3.5.98

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic: EDUCATION

Sub: Library

Current: EDUCATION

Sub: Library

Property name Rochambeau Branch, Prov. Public Library, Providence Cty., RI

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification:

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY  
REVIVALS/Colonial Revival

Other Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Materials: foundation	<u>BRICK</u>	roof	<u>Slate</u>
walls	<u>BRICK</u>	other	_____
	_____		

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

X See continuation sheet.

**8. Statement of Significance**

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

Applicable National Register Criteria: A & C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): \_\_\_\_\_

Areas of Significance: EDUCATION

SOCIAL HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: 1930 \_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates: 1930 \_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Bullder: A Howe, Wallis E.

B O.D. Purington & Co.

\_\_\_\_\_

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

X See continuation sheet.

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### Description

The Rochambeau Branch of the Providence Public Library (PPL) at 708 Hope Street is a one-story Colonial Revival (75' x 67') building constructed of Harvard brick with limestone trim and a slate roof. This is a second variation of architect Wallis E. Howe's branch prototype for the Providence Public Library.

Facing east, the principal elevation is dominated by a one-story Federal Revival porch which is reached by a wide flight of eight granite stairs. Six wooden fluted Corinthian columns support the top of the entrance porch which reads "Providence Public Library/Rochambeau Branch" in black lettering. The recessed door is framed by a wide surround and surmounted by a semi-circular fanlight. The recessed flanking walls are symmetrically punctuated by two long multi-pane sash windows with keystones highlighted with limestone. A molded brick water table carries around the building separating the main floor from the raised basement whose windows on the front and rear are located on axis with those above. A door to the basement is found on the west elevation. Howe incorporated a cross-gable roof which has end pavilions with gable ends toward the street. The pavilions contain large Palladian windows at both the front and rear of the building. The building is set on a raised basement.

The side elevations are alike in fenestration pattern, reflecting the arrangement of interior space; four sash windows flank each side of a brick chimney on north and south elevations. The seal of the PPL carved in stone is featured on the south elevation. The location of windows above interior bookshelves provides maximum natural light.

The three-part interior retains its original configuration and darkly stained woodwork. Two doors connect the entrance vestibule with the central hall/delivery area containing reference section, circulation desk, and librarian's office. Reading rooms flank the central space; the children's room is on the north and the adult reading room on the south. Both reading rooms have curved plaster ceilings. In the central area a dropped acoustical tile ceiling has been installed, although a circular glazed skylight is still visible. On the west wall behind the circulation desk a plaster festoon seen in early photographs surrounds the electric clock. In each reading room dark oak Palladian window surrounds and window seats are well preserved as are the prominent dark oak fireplace (non-functioning) surrounds featuring a broken pediment with carved owl. The reading rooms were once separated by glass partitions over low oak

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bookcases. The bookcases remain, but the glass partitions have been removed. Open shelves contain space for 12,000 books.

A stairway leads to the basement which houses a community room seating 140, a conference room, storage room with capacity for 10,000 books, staff rooms, rest rooms, and the heating plant. It is entered from enclosed interior stairs or an exterior entrance at the rear of the building. The basement's simple detail reflects its utilitarian function.

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### Photographs

3. Photographer: Jean Douglas
4. Date: March 1994
5. Negatives: R.I. Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
150 Benefit Street  
Providence, RI 02903

The above information applies to all photographs.

6. View: Facade, view to southwest.
7. Photo #1 of 3
  
6. View: Rear elevation, view to northeast.
7. Photo #2 of 3
  
6. View: Interior, circulation desk and librarian's office, view to west.
7. Photo #3 of 3

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### Significance

The branch libraries of the Providence Public Library, including the Rochambeau Branch, are historically significant for their role in the history of education in Providence and for their association with the history of the city's several immigrant communities. In addition, each branch is significant in the city's architectural history as a good example of its building type. Designed by Providence architect Wallis E. Howe and built in 1930 by contractor O.D. Purington & Co., construction costs for the Rochambeau Branch were approximately \$78,000. The branch occupies a corner lot at 708 Hope Street near Langham Road. It meets the requirements for registration under criteria A and C for its educational and architectural significance as more fully described in the multiple property submission "Branch Buildings of the Providence Public Library, Rhode Island, 1926-1932." The branch was made possible by a cooperative branch building plan between the Trustees of the PPL and the City of Providence. The cost of the building was met by the PPL's endowment and a \$10,000 increase in the annual appropriation to the PPL from the City of Providence.

The history of the Rochambeau Branch begins in 1915 when the Elodie Farnum Memorial Library was founded in a small room in the Rochambeau Avenue School through the joint effort of the Monday Morning Musical Club and the PPL. The opening of this library was made possible through a gift of \$665.27 received from the Monday Morning Musical Club in memory of Elodie Farnum, a promising young violinist who died of tuberculosis in May 1914 at the age of 12.

In 1924 the grammar school which housed the Elodie Farnum Memorial Library was moved to a new location on Summit Avenue and the library reopened to the public there. By 1926 annual circulation had reached 45,000 with almost 6,000 registered borrowers. The branch was conveniently located, but needed more space, a community room, and the separation of children and adult readers. On February 11, 1929 a library night was sponsored by the Rochambeau-Summit Avenue Parent-Teacher Association and the Monday Morning Musical Club. There were addresses regarding the branch library and the desperate need for a new building in order to expand and improve its service.

In response to this request, Clarence Sherman wrote a letter to the Parent-Teacher Association advising them of the status of the branch building program and assuring them that it was "decided to give attention

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to the so-called Rochambeau territory." He also mentioned that "the interest and activity of your Parent-Teacher Association did much to influence the City Government to increase the Library's appropriation the necessary \$10,000." <sup>1</sup> A site for the new branch was found in November 1929 at the corner of Hope Street and Langham Road. To perpetuate the name of the original branch library, the Trustees decided to designate the children's room in the new branch as the Elodie Farnum Memorial Children's Room, commemorated by a bronze plaque on the fireplace. A portrait of Elodie Farnum, painted by her father, H. Cyrus Farnum, was hung on the wall of the adjoining reference area and remains there today.

On November 17, 1930 the new Rochambeau Branch Library was officially dedicated and opened to the public. Nearly one thousand people inspected the building during the course of the evening. Mayor Dunne called the branch "one of the finest of its size anywhere in the country."<sup>2</sup> In 1935 a Neighborhood Advisory Committee was formed to maintain close contact with the community.

The branch continues to have close contact with neighborhood residents. An educational and cultural resource for people of all ages and nationalities, it remains a widely used resource. In 1986 the Russian Collection was moved from the Central Library to the Rochambeau Branch to better serve the influx of Russian immigrants in the neighborhood. The largely unaltered interior and exterior of the Rochambeau Branch are a constant reminder of its significant historical association.

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<sup>1</sup>Clarence Sherman to Mrs. James A. Doherty, Rochambeau Parent-Teacher Association, 17 October 1929.

<sup>2</sup>"Rochambeau Branch Dedication," Books for All 5 (December 1930): 286.



Property name Rochambeau Branch, Prov. Public Library, Providence Cty., RI

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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: Providence Public Library

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property: less than one

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	<u>19</u>	<u>300980</u>	<u>4635260</u>	B	_____	_____
C	_____	_____	_____	D	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description:  See continuation sheet.

Plat 6, Lots 498, 499

Boundary Justification:  See continuation sheet.

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the 1930 Rochambeau Branch Library.

**11. Form Prepared By**

Name/Title: Jean Douglas, Consultant

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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### Major Bibliographical References

"The Rochambeau Branch Dedication." Books for All 5 (December 1930):  
286-287.

Sherman, Clarence E., Associate Librarian to Mrs. James A. Doherty, 17  
October 1929.

Sherman, Clarence E. The Service of the Providence Public Library to the  
Community. Providence: Livermore & Knight Co., 1926.