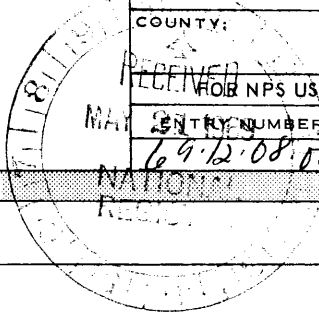


PH0021881

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: District of Columbia  
 COUNTY:  
 RECEIVED FOR NPS USE ONLY  
 ENTRY NUMBER: 69-12-08-0018  
 DATE: 12/3/69



**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Central Public Library, District of Columbia  
 AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Carnegie Library

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Mt. Vernon Square, 8th and K Streets, N. W.  
 CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington  
 STATE: District of Columbia CODE: 08 COUNTY: District of Columbia CODE: 001

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/>	Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>
Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/>	Private <input type="checkbox"/>	In Process <input type="checkbox"/>	Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/>	Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Object <input type="checkbox"/>	Both <input type="checkbox"/>	Being Considered <input type="checkbox"/>	Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/>	Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/>
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)				
Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/>	Government <input type="checkbox"/>	Park <input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation <input type="checkbox"/>	Comments <input type="checkbox"/>
Commercial <input type="checkbox"/>	Industrial <input type="checkbox"/>	Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Specify) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Educational <input type="checkbox"/>	Military <input type="checkbox"/>	Religious <input type="checkbox"/>	Public <input type="checkbox"/>	
Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/>	Museum <input type="checkbox"/>	Scientific <input type="checkbox"/>	Library <input type="checkbox"/>	

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNERS NAME:  
District of Columbia (building): United States of America (land)  
 STREET AND NUMBER:  
 CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Recorder of Deeds  
 STREET AND NUMBER:  
6th and D Streets, N. W.  
 CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:  
Washington District of Columbia 08  
 APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 2.74 acres

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY: Proposed District of Columbia Additions to the National Register of Historic Properties recommended by Joint Committee on Landmarks  
 DATE OF SURVEY: March 7, 1968 Federal  State  County  Local   
 DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
National Capital Planning Commission  
 STREET AND NUMBER:  
726 Jackson Place, N. W.  
 CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:  
Washington District of Columbia 08

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:  
COUNTY:  
ENTRY NUMBER: DATE:

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input type="checkbox"/>	Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/>	Ruins <input type="checkbox"/>	Unexposed <input type="checkbox"/>
INTEGRITY	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	Altered <input type="checkbox"/>	Unaltered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Moved <input type="checkbox"/>	Original Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Central Public Library, facing south on Mt. Vernon Square, N. W., consists of a rectangular central section 111'5" long (north to south) x 90'10" wide (east to west) with equal east and west side wings each 63'6" long (east to west) x 54'10" wide (north to south). It is a 3-story building with basement walls and approaches of pink Milford granite and upper exterior walls of white Vermont marble. Heavily ornamented with purely decorative forms, this massive building is an excellent example of the neoclassicism in vogue at the beginning of the 20th century. The exterior marble carvings and other ornaments were from models by Philip Martiny, executed under the direction of the architects Ackerman and Ross.

The principal K Street facade is composed of a 3-arched central section with two pedimented single-bay end pavilions flanked by 3-story, 3-bay side wings. The approach is by a series of granite steps, across a paved terrace with two banks of curved granite seats flanked by pedestals and inscribed with the words A UNIVERSITY FOR THE PEOPLE. These seats frame the steps leading up to the single entrance door set within the high central arch. Over the lintel of the entrance door is a plaque bearing the legend PUBLIC LIBRARY. Above this plaque the bracketed broken triangular pediment is surmounted by two seated cherubs holding an emblazoned shield. The top of the arch is filled with windows which provide light for the stair hall within. Like the central arch, the two flanking arches are composed of engaged pilasters with round-arched moulding and a scroll keystone. The top half of these arches is filled with windows; the marble walls of the lower half have rectangular bracketed blind niches with triangular pediments. In the spandrels over the arches are carved circular monograms in which are inscribed the letter W. Between the central arches, engaged Ionic columns, one on each end and two in front of each arch-supporting pier, are crowned by a frieze inscribed with the words SCIENCE POETRY HISTORY. On the second attic story above a strongly dentilled cornice are three large stone tablets inscribed from left to right: THIS BUILDING A GIFT OF ANDREW CARNEGIE; WASHINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY; and DEDICATED TO THE DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE. Between these tablets paired standing cherubs hold rectangular shields.

On the first story the single-bay end pavilions each have a round-arched curved niche at the back of which is set a smaller round-arched window. Above each of these niches a group of three narrow mullioned windows have a common elaborately bracketed sill bearing the year 1899 on the left and 1902 on the right. Over these windows each of the dentilled triangular pediments is filled with a carved marble Medusa-like head.

The side wings consist of a low granite basement story and a high marble main floor separated from the low attic story by an overhanging cornice. The walls of each of these wings are divided into three recessed rectangular niches in which are set the large round-headed window arches. The small mullioned windows of the second story are placed in groups of three above the arches of the main story. Originally these rectangular windows were covered by stone screens which were removed in 1926 because they shut out air and light.

The central section of the north rear facade is notable for its bold arrangement of narrow slotlike windows which light the book stacks.

(Continued on Form 10-300a)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

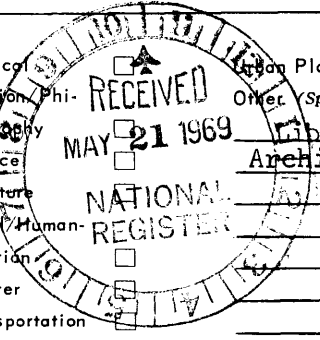
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian       16th Century       18th Century       20th Century   
 15th Century       17th Century       19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1899-1902

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |                |              |                                     |                     |                 |                                     |
|----------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Aboriginal     | Education    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Political           | Urban Planning  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Prehistoric    | Engineering  | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Religion/Philosophy | Other (Specify) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Historic       | Industry     | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Science             | Library         | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Agriculture    | Invention    | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Sculpture           | Architecture    | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Art            | Landscape    | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Social/Humanitarian |                 | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Commerce       | Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Theater             |                 | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Communications | Literature   | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Transportation      |                 | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Conservation   | Military     | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                     |                 | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
|                | Music        | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                     |                 | <input type="checkbox"/>            |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

The Joint Committee on Landmarks has designated the Central Public Library a Category II Landmark of importance which contributes significantly to the cultural heritage and visual beauty of the District of Columbia. This turn-of-the-century Beaux Arts Library was one of many buildings given to American cities by Andrew Carnegie to promote free library systems. It occupies the center of Mt. Vernon Square, a Category I Landmark and one of fifteen major squares on L'Enfant's 1791 plan of Washington. Although the Public Library is scheduled to move to new quarters in the near future, this distinguished building on its historic site should be retained for public use.

Mount Vernon Square was originally part of a parcel known as Port Royal owned by Lynch and Sands, two of the original proprietors of the District of Columbia. Although defined on L'Enfant's map of 1791, the square remained undeveloped until 1840 when the Northern Liberty Fire Company erected an engine house on the K Street side. In 1845 the Northern Liberty Market House was opened on the east side of the square. In the Know-Nothing Riot of June 1, 1857, 110 Marines drove off a group of Baltimore rowdies known as the Plug-Uglies who were obstructing voting at the K Street polls. The Northern Liberty Market was summarily torn down by the Board of Public Works on the night of September 3, 1872, as part of "Boss" Alexander Shepherd's massive city-wide improvement plan. Mount Vernon Square was then enclosed as a public park and remained so until the library was constructed.

The Washington Public Library system had its inception in 1895 when the Washington City Free Library, a voluntary institution supported by private contributors, was organized. An act of Congress of June 3, 1896, created the city library, but no Federal appropriations for its opening was made until 1898. The voluntary library of 12,412 books was then transferred to the city and the Board of nine trustees appointed by the D. C. Commissioners.

In 1899 Andrew Carnegie offered funds to construct a central library building provided that the city would maintain a free library service. After a national competition to which 24 architects submitted plans, Ackerman and Ross of New York were selected to design the library. The building was begun on April 24, 1901, and formally dedicated on January 7, 1903, with President Roosevelt and Andrew Carnegie attending the ceremony. Carnegie funds were also used to build the library's first three branches: Takoma Park, 1911; Southeastern, 1922; and Mount Pleasant, 1925.

(Continued on Form 10-300a)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Public Library of the District of Columbia, Annual Reports of the Board of Trustees, Washington: U. S. GPO, 1898-1907.  
 Washingtoniana Collection files, D. C. Public Library.  
 Washington City and Capital, Federal Writers' Project, WPA, Washington, D. C.: U. S. GPO, 1937.  
 Caemmerer, H. P., Washington the National Capital, Washington: U. S. GPO, 1932.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	38 ° 54 ' 10 "	77 ° 01 ' 27 "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	38 ° 54 ' 10 "	77 ° 01 ' 20 "				
SE	38 ° 54 ' 08 "	77 ° 01 ' 20 "				
SW	38 ° 54 ' 08 "	77 ° 01 ' 27 "				

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
 Nancy C. Taylor, Landmarks Historian

ORGANIZATION: National Capital Planning Commission      DATE: April 30, 1969

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 726 Jackson Place, N. W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington      STATE: District of Columbia      CODE: 08

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name *Wm F. [Signature]*

Title Deputy Mayor-Commissioner

Date May 12, 1969

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

*Ernest Allen Connolly*  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

DEC 9 1969

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

*William J. Mustang*  
 Keeper of The National Register

NOV 7 1969

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

RECEIVED		STATE
MAY 21 1969		District of Columbia
NATIONAL REGISTER		COUNTY
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE	
69-1298-0018	12/3/69	

(Number all entries)

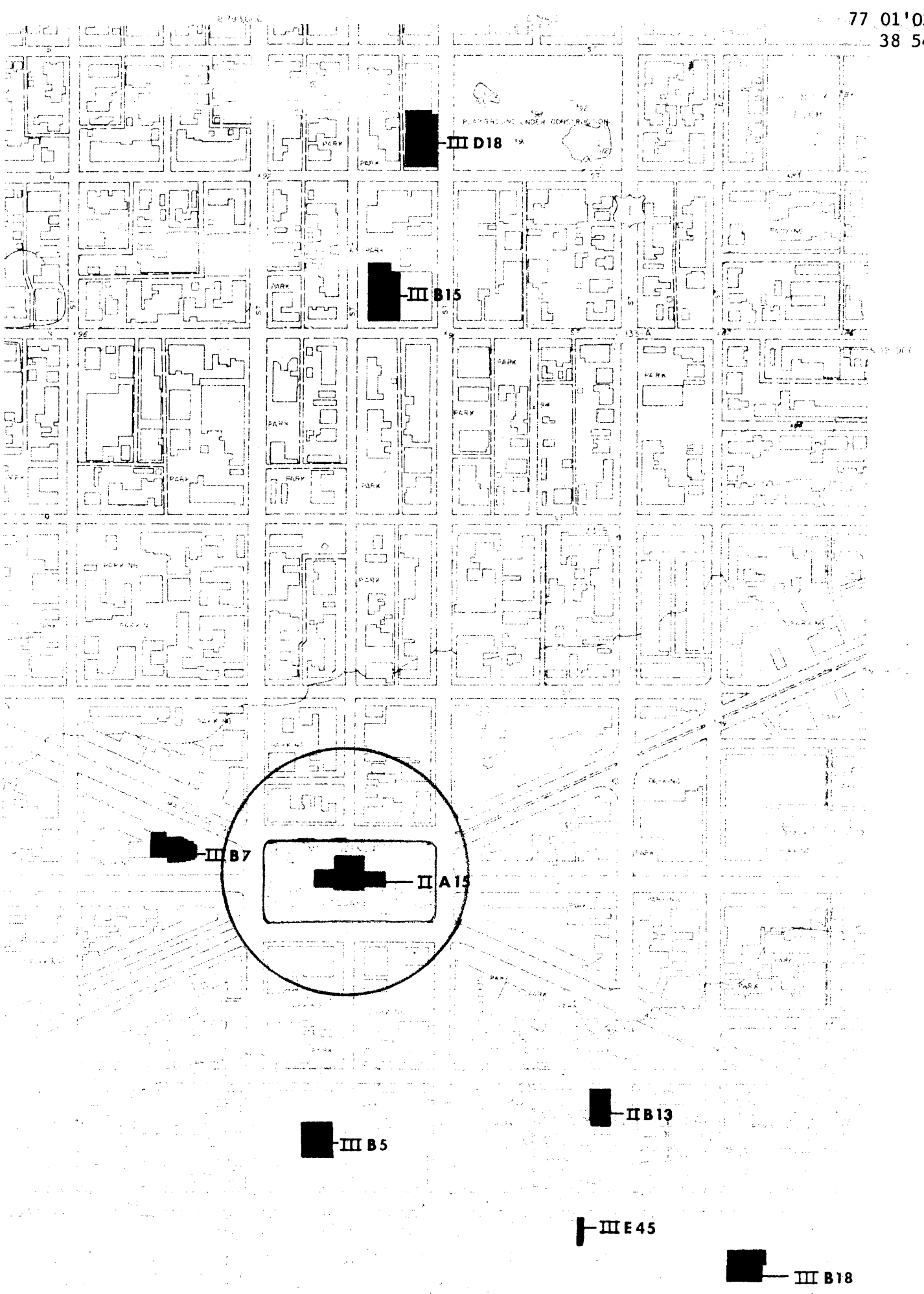
7. Description--Central Public Library

Compared to the elaborate exterior ornament, the interior embellishment is relatively simple. Perhaps the most striking interior elements are the double white marble stairways with ornamental iron railings on either side of the entrance door leading up to a halfway landing where they become one central flight to the second story exhibition hall. The ceiling over the stairway is barrel vaulted. Most of the second floor is lighted by skylights, as is the middle of the first floor from a well in the center of the main pavilion. In the entrance lobby paired square piers hold supporting beams on which are lettered the names Bacon, Shakespeare, Newton, Plato, Homer, and Galileo. In 1952 severe overcrowding forced the library to greatly alter the shape of its interior space in order to provide more open book shelves. The partitions added at that time and the galleries in the large reading rooms could easily be removed, however, and the building returned to its original floor plan.

8. Significance--Central Public Library

From its modest beginnings the D. C. Public Library has now grown to a collection of almost 2 million volumes, as well as a large number of microfilms and recordings. Of particular interest is the Washingtoniana Collection which contains the most complete history of the District of Columbia in existence. Nineteen branch libraries, several bookmobiles, and an extension service which lends to schools and institutions provide library services for the entire city of Washington.

77 01'03" W. Long.  
38 54'35" N. Lat



III D18

III B15

III B7

II A15

III B5

III B13

III E45

III B18

Central Public Library  
Mount Vernon Square



38 53'55" N. Lat