

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

For NPS use only

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

received MAY 12 1986

date entered 6-13-86

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic St. Petersburg Public Library

and/or common Mirror Lake Library, Carnegie Library

**2. Location**

street & number 280 Fifth St. N.

\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town St. Petersburg

\_\_\_ vicinity of

state Florida

code 12

county Pinellas

code 103

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
___ district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	___ agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	___ private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
___ site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	___ entertainment
___ object	___ in process	___ yes: restricted	___ government
	___ being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	___ industrial
	<u>N/A</u>	___ no	___ military
			___ museum
			___ park
			___ private residence
			___ religious
			___ scientific
			___ transportation
			___ other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name City of St. Petersburg

street & number P. O. Box 2842

city, town St. Petersburg

\_\_\_ vicinity of

state Florida

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Pinellas County Courthouse

street & number 315 Court Street

city, town Clearwater

state Florida 33633

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title St. Petersburg Historic Resources <sup>Survey</sup> has this property been determined eligible?  yes \_\_\_ no

date 1982 \_\_\_ federal \_\_\_ state \_\_\_ county  local

depository for survey records Bureau of Historic Preservation, DAHRM Florida Master site file

city, town Tallahassee

state Florida

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The St. Petersburg Public Library (Mirror Lake Branch) lies on the eastern shore of Mirror Lake on an artificial hill. It is a 5200 sq. ft. buff brick building (now stuccoed) with one story and a basement. Embellished with cast concrete ornament, it is Beaux Arts Style in design. The roof is gabled and surrounded by a continuous parapet. The interior is divided into a large reading room and a small stack room to the west, which is flanked by baths, stairs and storage areas. The basement was remodeled in 1924 as a stack room. A 2224 sq. ft. one-story wing was added to the south side of the building in 1950-51. Although the exterior is altered, the main floor interior spaces are remarkably intact under reversible alterations.

The St. Petersburg Public Library stands on the western edge of the Revised Original Plat of the city (1889). The rear of the library faced Mirror Lake (originally Reservoir Lake), whose shore is 300' to the west. The neighborhood east of Fifth Street North developed as a single family residential area of the city's elite. During the 1920's boom, this area became commercialized with winter resort hotels and apartment buildings. The character of this neighborhood changed little in 60 years in spite of high density rezoning in 1978.

The land west of Fifth Street North, the site of the library, was originally swamp land around the shore of Reservoir Lake. The curve of Fifth Street reflects the original shore line of this lake. This city-owned land was filled between 1908 and 1920 creating a lakefront park and new land for public buildings. A road around the perimeter of the lake became the city's first scenic drive and "lover's lane." To the south of the library site, the city's first public high school was built in 1910. The land north and northwest of the library in the 1920's became the site of the city's recreational complex of shuffleboard courts, lawn bowling courts (N. R. listed 1981), the Bridge Club and the Chess Club. The Public Library stands in the center of this complex of educational and recreational structures.

The St. Petersburg Public Library was built on a flat expanse of park land on the eastern edge of Mirror Lake. Fifth Street North forms the eastern and southeastern boundary of the site. The south and west boundaries of the library site were demarcated by Mirror Lake Drive, now removed. The library's grounds originally extended north to the southern edge of the Lawn Bowling Club and Shuffleboard Club.

This site affords the library high visibility from a number of vantage points. Although Mirror Lake Drive separated the library grounds from Mirror Lake Park, the library is visible from any point around the lake. Third Avenue North originally ended at Fifth Street, directly in front of the library, which makes the building visible for blocks rising at the end of the avenue. Fifth Street North curves to the east in the block in front of the library, which places the library on the main axis of the rest of the street, and makes it visible for blocks down Fifth Street. The dramatic vistas this site affords were used to full advantage by the library's architect. The center of the main (east) facade is aligned exactly with the center of Third Avenue North. The main roof ridge and the large Palladian windows of the north and south facades are aligned with the centerline of Fifth Street.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1915 **Builder/Architect** W. C. Henry/Henry Whitefield

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The St. Petersburg Public Library (Mirror Lake Branch) is significant as the first permanent home of the St. Petersburg public library system, of which it is still a branch. This building was important in the transformation of St. Petersburg from a pioneer village to a city with viable cultural institutions. It is also significant as an example of Andrew Carnegie's philanthropy which had a major impact on the development of American culture. The Public Library is also significant to the city's architectural history for being one of the earliest Beaux Arts Style buildings designed in this area.

The first attempt to furnish free reading matter to the people of St. Petersburg was made by members of the Christian Endeavor Society of the Congregational Church in 1899. The society managed to secure the interest of the young people of other churches and a small room was opened in the Durant Building, at Fourth Street and Central Avenue. The room was kept open many months with volunteer librarians. Interest waned, however, the room was vacated and the books and furniture were stored.<sup>1</sup>

This failure did not deter library advocates from trying again. In July, 1905, a permanent organization was formed with 122 members, under the name of the St. Petersburg Reading Room and Library Association. Elected officers were: Judge J. D. Bell, president; J. A. Sims, vice-president, and Mrs. Annie McCrae, secretary. A constitution and by-laws were adopted at a meeting in the school house on August 28, 1905.

On September 4, 1905, the association leased a room in the Bussey Building at 340 Central Avenue as its first reading room. Mrs. Bellona Havens was appointed the first librarian in 1906.

Mrs. Minnie Sorrels was appointed librarian in April, 1908. Shortly afterwards, a committee was appointed to file an application for a Carnegie library, but little was done to secure a donation at that time. T. J. Northrup was elected president of the association in September, 1908. A short time later, the new reading room in the Strowger Building at 420 Central Avenue had to be vacated. With no money and nowhere to go, the association stored its books and furniture.

The reading room was re-opened in the Mitchell Building at 401 Central Avenue in 1909. It remained there until the new Carnegie library was completed. Late in 1910, the library became a municipal institution with its expenses paid, or partly paid, by the city. The new city charter, which became effective on July 1, 1913, provided that the library and city advertising funds should be handled by a Library and Municipal Advertising Commission. William L. Straub was appointed president of the Commission; Arthur Johnson, vice-president and Mrs. Annie McCrae, secretary.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

(See Continuation Sheet)

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name St. Petersburg

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	7	33	8	3	60	30	73	1	6	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

(See Continuation Sheet)

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Howard Hansen and Diana Primelles

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date April 18, 1986

Division of Archives, History and Record Management

street & number The Capitol telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida

# 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *George W. King*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 5/2/86

### For NPS use only

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

Entered in the National Register date 6-13-86

*J. Selous Byers*  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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The original landscape design of the library's grounds was austere an open lawn with a few flowering shrubs planted along the sidewalks. The trees were not planted on the site till the 1930's, and they now block important vistas of the building.

The 1950 library addition and its walled garden now cover the entire south lawn of the library and block the view of the 1915 building to the south and southeast.

The original boundaries of the library site were severely affected by a 1976-77 city of St. Petersburg project to create a parking lot for a nearby State of Florida Office Building. A section of Mirror Lake Drive was vacated and leased to the State, along with the adjacent section of Mirror Lake Park. This area was then paved and part of Mirror Lake was filled behind a new seawall. An extension of Third Avenue North was cut through the northern part of the library site to give access to Mirror Lake Drive (see site plans).

The 1915 library is an inverted "T" shaped building in plan with a base of 2,600 sq. ft. The full basement was built about one foot above grade, and is partially concealed by an earth berm. The foundation is a continuous concrete spread footing, probably built over pilings, since the site is reclaimed marshland. The basement was finished when built in 1915, and served originally as storage and boiler room. The basement was completely remodeled in 1924 when it was converted into a stack room and children's reading room.

The exterior walls of the building are solid brick faced with a buff-colored brick laid in American bond with 1/4" lime mortar joints. The secondary material of the exterior is white portland cement type concrete that is cast into string courses, pilasters, cornices, window and door architraves, and other ornament. These concrete elements were originally unpainted and are laid with white concrete mortar joints. In elevation the exterior is divided into symmetrical bays that are defined by articulated string courses, doric pilasters, and a heavy cornice. The repetition of these elements unifies all of the building's facades into a cohesive design.

The main (east) facade is the longest of the building and is divided into five bays each containing a large window, except the central one, which contains the front door. The north and south facades are narrow gable ends that are mirror images of each other, and each is dominated by a large central palladian window. The west facade is composed around the projecting wing of the stack room. This facade faces Mirror Lake and had (demolished 1951) a large double flight of stairs that led to a central entrance door in the stack room wing. The gable end of this wing is enclosed by a parapet, identical to the north and south facades, except that it terminates with a chimney.

The interior of the main floor of the library is divided into two major spaces, the reading room and the stack room. The plan follows the standard Carnegie plan for libraries of this size, which is not merely coincidence since the architect was a consultant in drafting the Carnegie guidelines. The reading room is entered

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directly from the east facade door. This room in its design scheme echoes the exterior of the building with its use of doric pilasters and a heavy cornice. The relationship to the exterior is strengthened by the color of the walls which were painted the color of the exterior buff brick. The walls of this room are completely covered to a height of seven feet by built-in bookcases of pine stained a mahogany color. Other wood elements of this room include pilasters, doors and windows which were finished in the same way. A group of three arches, two glazed as windows and one as French doors, lead to the smaller stack room. This room is plain, ornamented only by a plaster cornice at the 12' high ceiling. The room is lined by wood bookshelves between doors that lead to bathrooms and stairs to the basement. Plain French doors in the west wall lead outside to stairs and Mirror Lake Park.

In 1924, the basement was remodeled into public spaces and four new windows were cut into the building below the string course. No other changes occurred on the exterior and the main floor interiors were left untouched.

The 1951 expansion program caused damage to the exterior integrity of the building. The new 2,224 sq. ft. wing was attached to the south facade of the 1915 building. The new wing, however, did not damage the south facade above the string course that defines the main floor level. The double stairs and berm on the west facade were removed and new windows and doors were cut into the building at the basement level. The brickwork on the exterior of the library was covered with a coat of concrete stucco. The original red glazed terra-cotta tile roof was replaced in 1962 with a composition shingle one. The ceiling in the reading room was lowered was a 2 x 4' panel suspended ceiling. The original ornamented vaulted plaster ceiling survives above, although it is water damaged.

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As stated before, the movement to secure a Carnegie library for St. Petersburg was launched in 1908. The matter languished, however, for a number of years. In 1912, Ralph Veillard, a city councilman at the time, entered into negotiations with the Carnegie Corporation. He was told that the city could secure a donation from the Corporation for \$12,500, but the city considered the amount insufficient. The Library and Municipal Advertising Commission took up the matter in mid-1913. Every effort was made to secure an increased donation, but no success was achieved until W. L. Straub, armed with a mass of letters and city reports, went to New York and met with officers of the corporation. He obtained a grant for \$17,500 on July 6, 1913.<sup>2</sup>

Andrew Carnegie considered public libraries the ideal medium for helping the "deserving poor." "I choose free libraries as the best agencies for improving the masses of the people, because they give nothing for nothing. They only help those who help themselves. They reach the aspiring, and open to these the chief treasures of the world--those stored in books." What had begun rather modestly in 1881 with the gift of a library building to his birthplace in Dunfermline, Scotland, would develop during the next three decades into an enterprise without parallel in the history of American philanthropy. By the time the last grant for this purpose was made in 1917, the list numbered 2,509 free public libraries throughout the English-speaking world, built at a cost of more than \$56 million. 1,697 libraries were built in the United States. Gifts were made in every state except Rhode Island.

Between 1886 and 1898, Carnegie had provided funds for the construction of 16 buildings. By contrast, the number of grants made in 1899 rose to 26, in 1901 to 131 and in 1903 to 204. Thereafter, until the program was discontinued 14 years later, the annual number averaged over 60. These later grants tended to be smaller, usually between \$5,000 and \$50,000, depending upon the population of the community. Grants could be had for the asking, provided Carnegie's requirements for the provision of a site could be met.<sup>3</sup>

Thirteen Carnegie grants for library buildings were given to Florida between 1901 and 1917; twelve to municipalities and one to Florida A & M University. Two cities, Pensacola and De Funiak Springs, rejected their grants. The other ten grants: Bartow, 1911; Bradenton, 1917; Clearwater, 1915; Gainesville, 1916; Jacksonville, 1902; Ocala, 1907; Palmetto, 1914; St. Petersburg, 1913; Tampa, 1901; and West Tampa, 1913, resulted in public libraries. These ten grants were worth in total \$198,000, ranking Florida 31st in monies received from the Carnegie Corporation.<sup>4</sup>

The St. Petersburg grant was approved by resolution of the City Commissioners on July 27, 1914. While the architect, Henry Whitfield, worked on the plans in New York, the city fathers argued about the most desirable site for the library. They were unwilling to provide a lot for the building other than land which was already in their possession. This meant that the only sites available were on Mirror Lake or the Tampa Bay waterfront. The Mirror Lake site was selected as being more central and convenient to the city's schools.<sup>5</sup>

The contract for the building was let to Walter C. Henry, who started work in October, 1914. The cornerstone was laid on December 19, 1914, with full masonic

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ceremonies. M. Leo Elliott of Tampa, acting architect for masonic ceremonies, "declared the stone to be true and level." Over 1,000 people turned out for the event presided over by Governor Park Trammel. The cornerstone was filled with the calling cards of everyone involved in the building project, and a photograph of Mary Love Henry, the granddaughter of the contractor, Walter Henry.<sup>6</sup>

The Carnegie Library Building was completed on September 11, 1915, and on October 1st, Miss Emma M. Williams was appointed librarian and Miss Margaret H. Jenkins was appointed assistant librarian. 2,600 books were moved to the new building and on December 1, 1915, it was opened to the public.<sup>7</sup>

The rapid population growth just prior to World War I and the explosive 1920's boom development made the new library inadequate within a few years. By 1925, St. Petersburg had grown from a population of 4,127 in 1920 to 65,000. In 1924, the library collection had grown to 12,000 volumes and the library was badly cramped for space. The basement was remodeled to accommodate children's books in 1925. To ease the crowding, a Glenoak Branch was opened on the south side of the city in 1926. In addition, a Negro library was established in the Campbell Park neighborhood in 1927.<sup>8</sup>

The disastrous financial condition of St. Petersburg after 1927 made funding for the library system impossible. The 1928 bond issue included money for two new wings on either end of the Carnegie building but it was defeated. The 1930-31 city budget included \$50,000 for library expansion but it was eliminated from the budget. In 1939, the Department of Public Works prepared plans for an expansion of the library at a cost of \$60,000-\$70,000, but this proposal also died in city council hearings. St. Petersburg, in spite of its inadequate facilities, was lucky to have a public library. In 1936, there were only 44 public libraries in Florida, and 41 counties had none.<sup>9</sup>

The friends of the Library Association was formed in 1947 to help solve the pathetic condition of the public library. In spite of intensive lobbying and fund raising activities, the city appropriated no monies for the library until 1950. The city council, on November 7, 1950, appropriated \$60,000 for the expansion of the library. William B. Harvard, AIA, of St. Petersburg, was chosen as the architect of this new 2,244 sq. ft. one-story wing on the south side of the Carnegie building. The new addition was still too small for the needs of a rapidly growing area of over 100,000 people. A branch library was opened in 1958 at Tyrone Shopping Center to serve people in the western part of the city.

St. Petersburg finally got an adequate new library building in 1963. Located at 3745 Ninth Avenue North, in the center of the city, it opened to the public on February 23, 1964. The Carnegie library became the Mirror Lake Branch Public Library, serving the downtown and eastern sections of the city.<sup>10</sup>



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FOOTNOTES

Statement of Significance

1. Grismer, Karl, History of St. Petersburg, P. K. Smith Co., St. Petersburg, 1949. pp. 144-148.
2. Ibid.
3. Rub, Timothy, "Andrew Carnegie and His Libraries," Architectural Record, July 1985.
4. Bobinsky, Ivan, Carnegie Libraries, American Library Association Press, 1955.
5. Op. Cit., Grismer.
6. St. Petersburg Times, December 20, 1914, Sec. A, p. 1
7. Op. Cit., Grismer.
8. Patane, Sylvia, "History of St. Petersburg Public Library System," 145 pp., unpublished manuscript of 1966, on file at St. Petersburg Public Library Reference Department.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bobibsky, Ivan, Carnegie Libraries, American Library Association Press, 1955.
- Grismer , Karl, History of St. Petersburg, P. K. Smith Co., 1949.
- Patane, Sylvia, "History of St. Petersburg Library System," 145 pp. unpublished manuscript of 1966, on file St. Petersburg Public Library Reference Department.
- Rub, Timothy, "Andrew Carnegie and His Libraries," Architectural Record, July 1985.
- "Carnegie Library Dedicated," St. Petersburg Times, December 20, 1914, Sec. A, p. 1.

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Verbal Boundary Description

Begin at a Point 229.7 feet North of Lot A of the revised map of St. Petersburg on the West Right-of-Way of Fifth Street North, then continue Northwest along curve to right radius 403.34 feet arc 103.9 feet, then North  $18^{\circ} 51' 45''$  West 65.51 feet, then North 136.07 feet to the South Right-of-Way of Third Avenue North, then Easterly and Southwesterly along the Right-of-Way of Third Avenue North and Fifth Street North 505 feet to the Point of Beginning.