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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name The Babylon Library

other names/site number Village of Babylon Historical and Preservation Society Museum

2. Location

117 West Main Street

not for publication

city or town Babylon

vicinity

state New York code NY county Suffolk code 103 zip code 11702

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Ruth A. Purpout DSHPO
Signature of certifying official/Title

6/17/15
Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain:)

Joe Elson & Beall
Signature of the Keeper

8-10-15
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION (library)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION & CULTURE (museum)

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

CLASSICAL REVIVAL (Neo-Classical Revival)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Cement block

walls: Cement stucco

roof: Asphalt

other: _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

Located in the eastern half of Long Island on the southwestern edge of Suffolk County, the Town of Babylon is bordered to the north by the Town of Huntington, to the east by the Town of Islip, to the south by the Atlantic Ocean, and to the west by Nassau County. The Village of Babylon is found along the south shore and western edge of the Township. The Babylon Library is located in the heart of Babylon Village at 117 West Main Street on the north side of the street facing south and set amidst village shops in the commercial corridor. Babylon Town Hall (listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2005) is on the next block to the east of the Library. Completed in 1911, the Babylon Library was designed by Arthur D. Pickering of the New York City based architecture firm Pickering & Walker and constructed by E.W. Howell. It was designed in the Neo-Classical Revival style, simple in its massing and restrained in its ornament. A rear addition was constructed in 1964 and built by E.W. Howell. The structure is freestanding with a parking lot on its western side and an empty grassy area on its eastern side. Built close to the street, there is a small brick and bluestone terrace on the front, or south elevation, with a fountain to the east of the entrance which was erected in 2010. The fountain is a reproduction of a historic fountain which was originally located at the corner of Main Street and Fire Island Avenue in the village.ⁱ

Narrative Description

The building is one story in height and is basically rectilinear in its footprint. It is about forty-two feet wide at the front or south elevation and eighty-three feet deep along the eastern elevation. The original structure is fireproof in its construction and clad in cement stucco and the addition is masonry construction with exposed cement block. The entire exterior is painted in an ecru hue. The roof is wood frame and hipped over the original structure and flat over the rest. The hipped part of the roof is “L” in shape with the corner at the southeast point of the structure and clad in asphalt shingles. A decorative copper crest runs the length of the ridges of the hipped roof and there are plant-inspired acroteria at the corners of the metal crests. The foundation is concrete block.ⁱⁱ

The front or south elevation is symmetrical in its design and vertically tripartite in its arrangement of entablature, wall and base. There are simple unadorned corner pilasters which are capped by simple square projections which extend above the roof line. A cornice runs at the roof line as part of an austere entablature. On either side of the centered entry is a grouping of three windows directly under the entablature. The double-hung windows are replacement and separated by mullions with simple pilasters. The entry is raised a few feet above street level and accessed by three poured cement steps with a handicap ramp to the south. The steps and handicap ramp were added to replace the original steps in 1992. The single glazed, wood door is also a replacement and is surrounded by a simple wood molding. The door is flanked by simple Tuscan columns which are on the interior of the full-height entry surround. The surround projects from the building façade and the entablature of the front elevation runs around top of the entry surround. The entry is capped by a balustrade with urn-shaped balusters, one of which is missing. A blue sign with gold lettering is placed below the cornice

ⁱ The original fountain was damaged beyond repair. The current fountain is a reproduction.

ⁱⁱ Access was not provided to the basement. The information of some of the construction elements was provided by the Village of Babylon Maintenance Department.

of the entry surround that reads “Village of Babylon Historical & Preservation Society.”

The east elevation is in three sections, the last two are each recessed slightly from the one to its south. The two southern sections are part of the original structure and the northern most section is part of the 1964 addition. The entablature on the front elevation continues on the first wall section on the east elevation. This section of the east elevation is arranged in the same tripartite arrangement seen on the front elevation of entablature, wall and base. It is symmetrically arranged with a large round arch window at the center which has two double hung wood windows with six over six lights and separated by a single mullion running the height of the window. There is a decorative scrolled keystone at the top of the arched window. The arched window is flanked by two small windows which are directly under the entablature and interrupt the extension of the architrave. The window to the north is six lights and the one to the south is replacement. The middle section is more austere than the section to the south and has a simple cornice and slight base. There are three wooden, double hung windows resting on a simple sill projection and at the same height as the windows in the south section. The last section is unadorned and has four square windows, all double hung, and there is a raised entry with a metal door between the third and fourth windows.

The west elevation is also in sections and the first section at the south end of the elevation is a copy of the one seen on the east elevation with the round-arch window. The round-arch window is fixed with divided lights. The interior chimney is plainly visible on this elevation and is part of the original structure. The next section, working north, is the transition between the old and new parts of the building. A narrow recessed section with a small window and original to the 1911 structure is between the southern section and the 1964 addition. The rest of the west elevation steps back twice as it goes north and there are three windows. There are no plans on record for the structure, neither from the 1911 construction nor the 1964 addition. However comparisons of the present day structure to historic aerial photographs show the original foot print was an L following the hipped roof lines. The inside corner was on the west elevation and had a small wing still seen in the recessed section between the old and new parts of the structure.

³ The rear or north elevation is thirty-one feet and six inches wide and the west part projects nearly four feet in front of the east part. The east part of the rear elevation has two square, double-hung windows.

The interior of the Babylon Library retains much of its features both from the original structure and the 1964 addition in spite of the change in function of the building. The interior of the original structure is divided into five areas defined by program and expressed in the recently restored curved plaster ceilings over each area and further separated by partition walls. The entry vestibule is the first area measuring seven feet, six inches by nine feet and enclosed by partition walls. To the east of the vestibule is a small alcove open to the main reading room. The main reading room is at the center of the plan measuring twenty-four feet by thirty-six feet. After the 1964 addition, the main reading room was arranged to make it more spacious and inviting. On the south end of the main reading room is another alcove, also open to the main reading room. On the west side of the reading room is the reception room, later used as the children’s room, which is separate from the main reading room by a partition wall and accessed through a doorway off the vestibule. An original fireplace is located at the south end of the reception room. Originally, small bathrooms were located on either side of the fireplace; now these spaces are used as storage closets. The building’s simple interior plan allowed for librarians to easily move shelves and modify the space as needed.

The 1964 addition, constructed on the north end of the structure, offers minimal visual impact to the original building as seen from West Main Street. This addition expanded the reading room, areas open to the public, and allowed for the installation of a fire-proof vault to store rare materials; this vault is encased in concrete and is

³<http://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Planning/Divisions/CartographyandGIS/HistoricalAerials.aspx>

located on the northwest corner of the addition. In 2008, grant funds were received to relocate the bathrooms to the rear of the building in order to create handicap accessible facilities to comply with the ADA. In 2010, grant funds were received to install a kitchen in one of the former bathroom spaces. The other bathroom space was made into a storage closet.⁴ These changes are minor and do not substantially impact the library's integrity.

⁴ Grants were awarded by Senator Owen Johnson in 2008 and 2010 to fund minor interior changes. All plans were reviewed and approved by the State Historic Preservation Office.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1911-1968

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Arthur D. Pickering, Architect

E.W. Howell, Builder

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance encompasses the opening of the library in 1911 through a second building campaign in 1964 and ends in 1968 when the library closed.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Babylon Library is significant under Criterion A in the category of education as a local reflection of a national trend in establishing libraries in smaller villages and towns throughout the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The construction of the Babylon Library reflects an educational development trend representing the evolution of a dynamic public library movement that was occurring throughout the United States.⁵ Andrew Carnegie’s \$50 million donation toward library construction in American towns and cities led to donations by other wealthy members of society to support the cause. In addition to Carnegie’s contribution, private donors gave approximately \$34 million to fund libraries in the United States between 1890 and 1906.⁶ Similarly, the Babylon Library was funded through community contributions and the private donation of land by the locally prominent Livingston family in 1909.

The Babylon Library, designed by architect Arthur D. Pickering in 1911, is also locally significant under Criterion C as an intact, representative example of the Neo-Classical Revival style popular in public architecture in the early 20th century. Early 20th century public architecture was largely influenced by the City Beautiful movement which emanated from the Columbia Exposition in Chicago in 1893. The movement dictated that architecture be monumental and symmetrical with a broad and richly illustrative vocabulary of Classical ornament. Civic monuments- from the grand symphony hall to the austere village library-were designed in the Classical mode. Many Carnegie-funded libraries were built in this grand style, which was intended to honor both the community and its educational contents. By 1911, the image of the grand “temple of knowledge” Carnegie-style library was such a part of the culture that this style was chosen in Babylon, even though there was no direct Carnegie influence.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Local Historic Context

The land which later became the Village of Babylon was purchased from the Sumpwam Indians in 1670 and was known as Huntington South. The Town of Huntington sent farmers down from the north to harvest the rich salt hay in the area for their livestock. The trip across the island was lengthy and the farmers would stay in Huntington South for a few days to rest for the journey home. Additionally, travelers from New York City would stop in Babylon on their three-day journey to Southampton. Stores, services, and inns sprang up to serve these visitors. The abundance of fresh seafood from the Great South Bay provided both income and food for the settlers. Additionally, fresh water streams running from north to south supplied power for mills that produced grain, lumber and paper, and Babylon developed into a bustling center of activity by 1800.⁷

Babylon Village was named by Nathaniel Conklin, who predicted its success as a prosperous town. Local lore has it that his mother was unhappy living in Babylon across the street from a tavern in a house that he had built and compared the village to the biblical Babylon. The cornerstone of her extant house reads “New Babylon, This House Built by Nat Conklin, 1803.”⁸

⁵ Wayne A. Wiegand & Donald G. Davis, Jr., *Encyclopedia of Library History* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1994), p. 354.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 521.

⁷ Village of Babylon, “Our History,” www.villageofbabylonny.gov/history.

⁸ *Ibid.*

The coming of the railroad in 1867 turned the village into a booming resort area which would eventually house 11 hotels. With the village's proximity to the Great South Bay, a trolley line was established from the train depot to the steamship dock where ferries took passengers over to the beaches.⁹ In 1872, Huntington South became the Town of Babylon with its own governing board. In 1893, the Village of Babylon incorporated.

By the early 20th century, the expansion of the Long Island Railroad and the development of the summer resort trade produced a great growth in population in the village.¹⁰ The need for a library as well as other public services that would serve the growing summer and year-round population of the village was evident. By 1910, the village had a population of 2,600.¹¹ The Main Street commercial district, where the Babylon Library is located, developed to its present extent by the early 20th century. With the onset of suburban development in the post World War II era, Babylon grew to its present population of approximately 12, 153.¹²

The Public Library Movement

The years between 1870-1930 saw the emergence of the local public library as a permanent institution within American communities.¹³ The public library was developed as part of the nation's larger educational movement and its expansion coincided with two significant changes in the United States: the emergence of mandatory primary education and secondary school enrollment.¹⁴ In the early years of the public library movement, many community libraries were run by non-governmental associations as social libraries. Social libraries were usually corporations formed by volunteer library associations and funded by subscriptions or inexpensive membership dues. Individual donations of private collections were often the catalyst in establishing such libraries.¹⁵ These libraries shared the same fundamental organizational form as free public libraries, run by a board of trustees whose membership consisted of a veritable "who's who" of local residents. Social libraries endured for decades before their boards eventually agreed to turn them over for free public use in return for continual municipal funding. In fact, one-sixth of public libraries in cities of more than 30,000 people were owned or controlled by library associations or corporations until the early 1930s.¹⁶

Women played a tremendous role in the development of public libraries. A frequent claim in library historiography is that by the 1930s "75 percent of the public libraries in this country owed their origins to women's clubs." These women were often the force behind obtaining funds from philanthropic sources. Although he was a prominent force in the design and construction of new libraries, Andrew Carnegie was not the only library philanthropist. Major benefactors throughout the nation either supported libraries in the course of their lifetimes or left bequests for public libraries.¹⁷

The combination of normal growth factors and philanthropy led to a period of rapid growth beginning in the 1890s. There were 5,954 public libraries serving 57 percent of the American population by 1926. By 1936, the numbers increased to 6,235 libraries serving 63 percent of the population. Although there were many regional differences in the number and quality of libraries, every state had public library service by the 1920s.¹⁸

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Federal Census, New York, 1890, 1900, 1910.

¹² [Quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/3603408.html](https://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/3603408.html).

¹³ Michael Kevane & William A. Sundstrom, "The Development of Public Libraries in the United States, 1870-1930: A Quantitative Assessment," *Information & Culture: A Journal of History*, Volume 49, No. 2, 2014, p. 117.

¹⁴ Ibid., 118.

¹⁵ Wiegand & Davis, Jr., p. 513.

¹⁶ Kevane & Sundstrom, p. 126.

¹⁷ Ibid., 129.

¹⁸ Wiegand & Davis, 521.

The Babylon Library had its roots in a local women's club and was financed by local benefactors. Initially, it was formed as a social library and later became a free public library. Its evolution is reflective of the national public library movement which took place in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Building History and Significance

The Babylon Library had its origins in a Book Circle formed in 1887 by three local women: Mrs. Thomas B. Arnold, Miss Loreign Reid, and Miss Louise Sammis. It was developed when these women decided that they wanted to be able to read more books and have them available for themselves as well as their friends. The circle started out with twenty-five members and dues were three dollars each. Once a member had finished a book, it was passed on to another member or left at some convenient place in the village where it could be picked up by the next member on the list.¹⁹ For many years, the Book Circle's collection was housed in borrowed office spaces throughout the village. David A. Sammis (father of Louise), owner of the famous Surf Hotel on Fire Island, donated the use of a room in the upper story of a building on Main Street. When the Book Circle became too large for the room, they moved to the Women's Exchange on Deer Park Avenue in the village. The Women's Exchange was eventually dissolved and Leopold Fishel donated two rooms in his office building in the village to the circle.²⁰

As the Book Circle grew in size, its members began to envision the construction of a public library for the use of all interested residents in the village. At this time, much progressive activity was happening in the area. In 1893, the Village of Babylon incorporated. By the early 20th century, the expansion of the Long Island Railroad and the development of the summer resort trade produced a great growth in population in the village.²¹ The need for a library that would serve the growing summer and year-round population of the village was evident.²² Amidst the growth and development of their once small village, the Book Circle decided to form an incorporated library association.²³

On April 30, 1895, the Book Circle was incorporated as the Babylon Library Association under the laws of the State of New York. It operated as a private or social library where members paid annual dues. The incorporation of the association was done by eight village residents: Lillian H. Fishel, Antoinette H. Sammis, Minnie L. Reid, Washington F. Norton, Eva L. Diossy, Sarah E. Sammis, Lulu Fishel and James W. Eaton.²⁴ Those associated with the Book Circle and the Babylon Library Association were members of well-known, influential local families.²⁵ Before incorporation between 1887 and 1892, membership fluctuated between twenty-two to forty-four members. By June 1908, membership had grown to sixty-seven annual subscribers and twenty-six six-month subscribers.²⁶

¹⁹ Marilyn C. Jawitz, "History of the Babylon (New York) Public Library from 1895 to 1970," Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Graduate Library School of Long Island University, Brookville, New York, 1971, p. 13.

²⁰ Patricia LaWare, & Andrew J. Hamm, "The Babylon Public Library: A Centennial Report," 2011. (Article located in the Babylon Village Public Library's History Room).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Federal Census, New York, 1910.

²³ LaWare, & Hamm.

²⁴ Jawitz, p. 13.

²⁵ Notes from Babylon Town Historian Mary Cascone: "Mrs. Arnold was the wife of a local doctor. Miss Reid was the daughter of Suffolk County Judge John R. Reid. The two Misses Sammis were daughters of David S.S. Sammis, owner of the Surf Hotel on Fire Island. The two Misses Fishel were daughters of a local merchant Leopold H. Fishel, who had previously owned a dry goods and grocery store. Mr. Eaton resided in adjacent West Islip, and was the author of "History of the First Presbyterian Church of Babylon, Long Island, from 1730 to 1912," and contributed to Benjamin P. Field's "Babylon Reminiscences," published in 1911."

²⁶ Jawitz, pps. 13, 15.

The library association continued to house its collections in temporary sites while starting a fund to construct a library building. Fundraising efforts included local concerts, outdoor fairs and campaign drives. Entertainment was a means of raising money and there were many people in Babylon who had musical prowess. Beginning in 1896, the association held a concert which raised one hundred and fifty dollars. In 1902, a prominent member of the Rogers family, Mrs. Oliver B. Rogers, arranged a children's fair and raised one hundred eighty-eight dollars. Cake sales, plays, motion picture shows, basket ball and bridge games along with donations by the Epsworth League and the Traveler's Club helped to build up the fund.²⁷ As well, a total of 140 subscribers contributed to the construction of the library, and practically all were from well-known local families.²⁸ In 1909, a prominent parcel of land on West Main Street was donated to the association for its new building by local newspaper editor Elbert Carll Livingston and his sister, Julia T. Livingston.²⁹ The association formed a building committee, consisting of Mrs. Robbins, Miss Sammis and Miss Fishel, to investigate building plans and costs. Similar to other library associations of the time, the building committee covered much ground, traveling to see libraries in different communities for ideas. They visited every library on Long Island and many in New York State and southern New England in Jeremiah Robbin's car, the only automobile in the village at that time.³⁰ Competitive designs for a library building to cost about \$5,000 were solicited.³¹

In the fall of 1910, the library association chose New York City architect Arthur D. Pickering, of the firm Pickering and Walker, to design the new building. Arthur Donovan Pickering was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1859 and studied architecture in New York with John H. Duncan and Bruce Price. He worked as a draftsman before opening his own practice in Manhattan in 1866. From 1902 to 1911, Pickering was in partnership with Keith Pinckney Walker, in the Manhattan firm of Pickering & Walker. Walker, who had also worked for Price, was born in South Carolina and had set up his own practice in Manhattan in 1900. After the partnership ended, Pickering, a member of the Architectural League, returned to private practice; he died in 1923. He and his firm are associated with many buildings in New York.³² Examples of work done by the firm include apartment houses at 869 and 969 Park Avenue, The Tuxedo at 221-223 Columbus Avenue, and 113 and 127 East 65th Street. Other examples of projects by Pickering after the dissolution of the partnership were the Canadian Pacific Building and Fifth Church of Christ, Scientist in Manhattan.³³

Pickering was given the charge of designing "a substantial library building that will not only be an ornament to the village, but a monument to the work of the faithful who have labored diligently for this accomplishment."³⁴ He chose a Neo-Classical Revival style design for the Babylon Library, conforming to period ideals of library design by employing Classical elements but on a smaller scale.³⁵ The simple design and plan of the Babylon Library is typical of small village libraries. Though it was not funded by Carnegie, it reflected the design of many of the small libraries endowed by him. The Carnegie Corporation recommended that the best plan for a

²⁷ Ibid, 14.

²⁸ Ibid, 19.

²⁹ "Babylon," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 8, 1910, p. 81.

³⁰ LaWare & Hamm.

³¹ Jawitz, pps. 15-16.

³² James Ward, *Architects in Practice: New York City 1900-1940* (Union, New Jersey: J&D Associates, June 6, 1989), p. 61. New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Park Avenue Historic District Designation Report," April 29, 2014, p. 131.

³³ "Tuxedo," Upper West Side Building Database, <http://www.landmarkwest.org/landscapedisplay>; "Upper East Side Historic District Designation Report," Volume IV, NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1981, pps. 1315-16, <http://www.neighborhoodpreservationcenter.org>; "Number 829 Park Avenue, New York," *Architecture and Building*, Vol. 44, January 1912, pps. 68-69; "The Canadian Pacific Building" and "Fifth Avenue Church of Christ, Scientist," *Architecture and Building*, Vol. 54, January-December, 1922, pps. 6-7 and "Madison Avenue Offices," *The Architectural Record*, Vol. 48, July-December, 1920, pps. 213-217.

³⁴ "The New Library Plans," *South Side Signal*, September 23, 1910, p.1.

³⁵ Wiegand & Davis, p. 355.

small library would be a rectangular-shaped building with a basement and one floor. Although originally L-shaped in plan, Pickering's design otherwise mirrored the Carnegie recommendations as a one-story structure with a basement. Additionally, Pickering's straightforward design of a small, more austere structure ensured that the diversion of funds for excess ornament or unnecessary features would be avoided. At the time, the Carnegie Corporation noted that a frequent cause of waste was the attempt to get a Greek Temple or adaptation of it, when only a small amount of money was allotted for construction.³⁶

The Neo-Classical Revival style grew in popularity as a result of the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago in 1893. The Chicago fair heralded America's expanding international presence and ignited the nation with a passion for the City Beautiful. The planners of the exhibition issued a directive that the designs were to follow a classical theme. The theme was set to match the grandeur of the Imperial Age it reflected.³⁷ Many of the best-known architects of the time designed dramatic Neo-Classical models around a central court. All of the designs drew closely on the nation's interest in the Early Classical and Greek Revival styles by creating architecture in grand scale: monumental, symmetrical and richly appointed with broad Classical vocabulary and ornament.³⁸ Since the Chicago Fair was so well attended and extensively photographed, the Neo-Classical Revival style became extremely popular throughout the United States. These models inspired a whole new generation of public and commercial buildings across America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The architecture of public library buildings constructed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was, much like other public architecture, directly influenced by the commissions received by prominent architects who had studied at the École des Beaux Arts and had either designed or were influenced by the buildings in the Columbian Exhibition. The foremost example during this time period is the Boston Public Library, which was first established in 1848 by an act of the Great and General Court of Massachusetts. It was the first large free municipal library in the United States and played an important role in the public library movement.³⁹ The commission for the design of the new Boston library in Copley Square was given to Charles McKim. McKim had studied at the École and was a major planner for the World's Columbia Exposition in 1893. He was successful in fulfilling his mission to make the Boston Public Library a first class architectural and artistic achievement.⁴⁰ The library, designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1986, is cited as "the first outstanding example of Renaissance Beaux-Arts Classicism in America."⁴¹ Examples of other classically themed library designs influenced by the École and the World's Columbia Exhibition were the Milwaukee Public Library (1898), St. Louis Public Library (1905), New Haven Public Library (1905), and the Indianapolis Public Library (1917).⁴²

Historian Donald E. Oehlerts argues that Boston Public Library inspired a wave of new library construction. "The construction of the Boston Public Library Building in Copley Square began a new era in public library architecture in the United States...it came just at the time when the architectural and library professions were expanding rapidly to meet the needs of urban populations in all parts of the country. Its completion in 1894 signaled the beginning of four decades in which public library buildings were completed in almost every U.S.

³⁶ "Northport Public Library National Register of Historic Places Listing", Northport, New York, September 30, 1996, Section 8, pps. 3-4.

³⁷ Carole Rifkind, *A Field Guide to American Architecture*, (New York, New York: Penguin Group, 1980), p. 217.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Boston Public Library, "A Brief History and Description," www.bpl.org/general/history.htm.

⁴⁰ Donald E. Oehlerts, *Books and Blueprints: Building America's Public Libraries*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991), pps. 36-37.

⁴¹ Boston Public Library, "A Brief History and Description," www.bpl.org/general/history.htm.

⁴² Oehlerts, pps. 41, 44, 46.

city and town.”⁴³ The Boston Public Library served as a model for a number of smaller buildings designed over the next twenty years; many librarians, architects and local building committees traveled to Boston in the process of planning their own buildings.⁴⁴

Notable features of the Babylon Library that place it primarily within the Neo-Classical Revival style include a symmetrical façade, freestanding columns flanking the main entrance, a parapet with railing containing urn-shaped balusters, and other classically inspired ornamental details. Other fine features of the building include the hipped roof with copper crest and plant-inspired acroteria at the metal corners as well as the curved plaster ceilings in the library’s interior.

The Babylon construction firm of E.W. Howell was hired to construct the building for a bid of \$6,395.⁴⁵ The E.W. Howell construction company was established in Babylon, New York in 1891. It was founded as Brown & Howell by Elmer Winfield Howell and his father-in-law, George S. Brown, and specialized in residential development. Howell later bought Brown’s interest in the partnership and created the firm under his own name. The E.W. Howell firm built many North Shore mansions on Long Island for clients from notable families such as Rockefeller, Guggenheim, Roosevelt, and Astor.⁴⁶ Howell was also active in the construction of many residences and commercial buildings in and around Babylon Village.⁴⁷ The new library was officially dedicated on October 23, 1911.⁴⁸

Education was an important component of the new library’s mission. After the building was dedicated, the library was open every evening, except Sunday, as a free reading room in addition to its regular daytime hours. There was also a Saturday afternoon children’s story hour which was led by a teacher from a small private school in Babylon. The story hour was one of the most rewarding parts of the year’s work. Throughout the years, the library was a harbor for “serious minded youth” to come to study and learn. The Babylon Library continued as a social library until 1933, when local residents successfully petitioned the village to grant a yearly subsidy to make it a public institution. Shortly thereafter, the library became a member of the American Library Association in September, 1936 and joined the Suffolk County Library Association in 1940.⁴⁹ The library continued to grow into the 1950s and was facing financial difficulties, book storage issues and lack of program areas. Lack of shelf space was a big problem. Additionally, there was a pressing need for a children’s reading room to support the growing population of children who were utilizing the library for education as well as recreational purposes. In 1961, the Babylon School District began contributing to the support of the library and assumed full financial support in 1964.⁵⁰

Upon her death, Julia T. Livingston left funds to build an addition to the library which would provide office space for the village historian, a fire-proof vault and display cabinets, and a large room for use as a children’s library and space for public events. The construction firm of E.W. Howell was once again hired to build the addition at the rear of the building in 1964. Once the addition was completed, the new children’s reading room was open on weekday afternoons from 3:00 to 5:30, weekday evenings from 7:00-9:00, and Saturday from 9:00-12:00pm. Two employees were hired to staff and support the children’s reading room: Mrs. Rachel LeFevre and Mrs. Gingles. Led by Mrs. LeFevre, the library sponsored a summer reading program dubbed “the Starfish

⁴³ Ibid., 35.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 37.

⁴⁵ “E.W. Howell Gets Library Contract,” *South Side Signal*, November 25, 1910, p.1.

⁴⁶ “E.W. Howell Co., Inc.,” <http://www.referenceforbusiness.com/history/De-En/E-W-Howell-Co-Inc.html>

⁴⁷ Notes from Babylon town historian, Mary Cascone.

⁴⁸ Jawitz, p. 20.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 20, 26-28.

⁵⁰ Cascone.

Reading Club” in 1965. Over 200 children were enrolled in the program and Mrs. LeFevre was on-hand every weekday to assist the children in choosing their books. Later that year, a program of weekly picture book and story hours on Wednesday and Saturday mornings was instituted for pre-school and primary-grade children. The program was so popular that a second session had to be added to accommodate all of the children who wished to attend. Additionally, the staff began a heavy schedule of weekly visits to grades K-2 classes in both the local public and parochial schools to introduce children to the library. In turn, classes began visiting the library, bringing hundreds of children to the library for the first time.⁵¹

The post-war population increase that fueled the Baby Boomer generation led to a continued increase in membership, a larger overall collection and the need for an expanded children’s library in line with the library’s new services.⁵² In 1968, a larger, more modern public library was constructed and opened on South Carll Avenue to accommodate this growth. At that time, the Babylon Library was acquired by the village and was utilized to house its building department. Six years later, Babylon Village agreed to allow the Babylon Historical and Preservation Society to occupy the building.⁵³ The society, which received its official charter on November 5, 2012, continues to use the building as a public museum. Both the village and the historical society have been sensitive stewards of the historic building; the only significant changes made were the rear addition in 1964 and the installation of a handicapped accessible ramp in early 1992. The original setting, masonry, most windows, wood roof, floor plan and interior finishes remain intact.

Incorporated in 1895, the Babylon Library Association, which gave birth to the Babylon Library, is the third oldest library organization in Suffolk County.⁵⁴ The Babylon Library building endures today as a reminder that social and later public libraries were as essential to the development of citizens as to public education. The Village of Babylon Historical and Preservation Society operates under the same premises, offering archival and research materials, art exhibits on local history and children’s education programming. Limited funding (the society is a non-profit organization) and a love for the building have allowed the original structure to survive intact and remain open to the public. With its historic archives and wonderful assortment of historic collections, the Babylon Library has much to delight and educate a contemporary audience.

⁵¹ Jawitz, pps. 40-42.

⁵² Ibid., 43.

⁵³ Cascone.

⁵⁴ LaWare & Hamm.

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www.villageofbabylonny.gov/history

_____ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____ Name of
_____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____ repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if
assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .12
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>18</u>	<u>641493</u>	<u>4506384</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

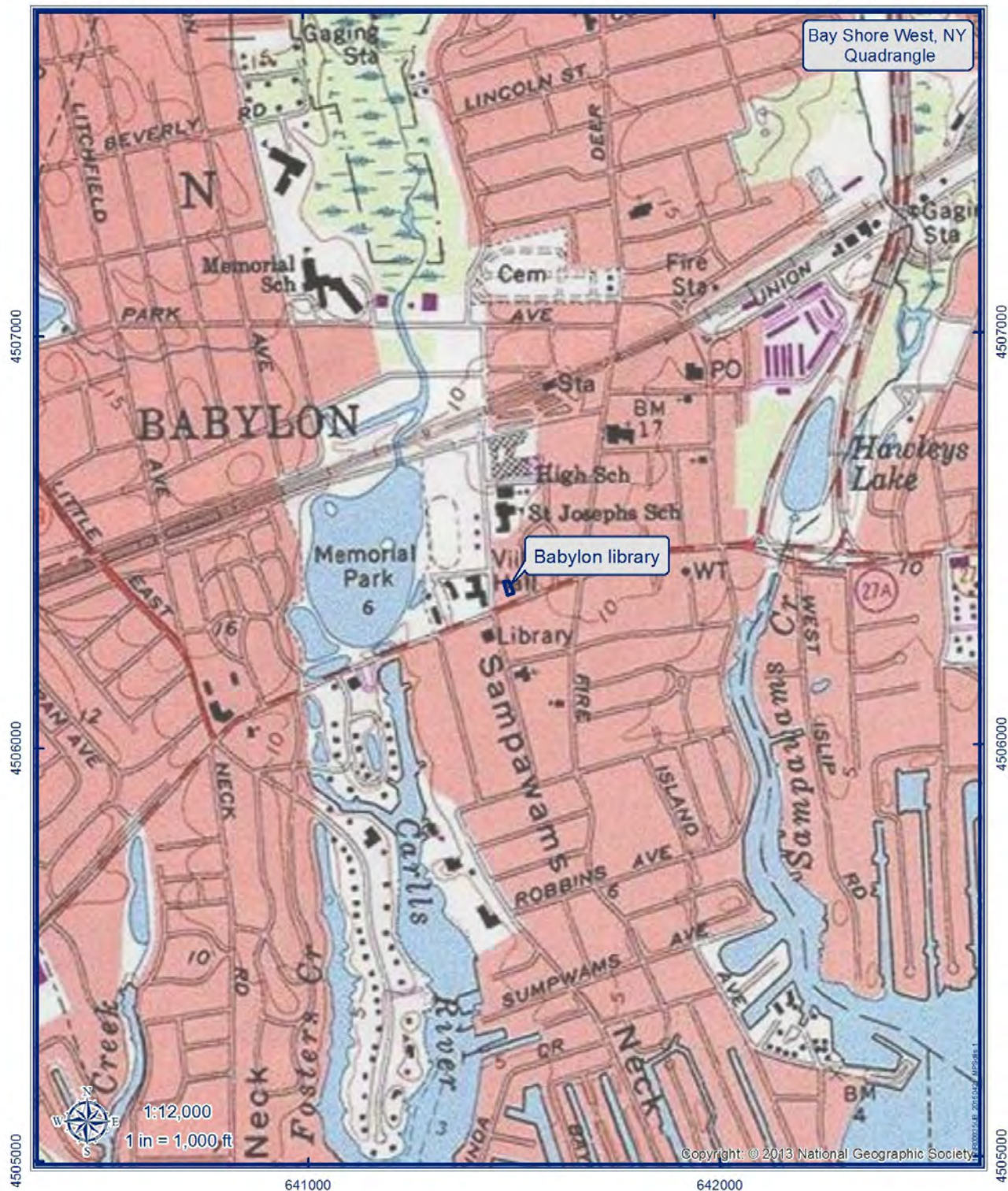
The boundaries of the Original Babylon Library property follow the original lot lines of a roughly rectilinear lot with its south boundary line along Main Street and measuring approximately 56 and a half feet wide; its western lot line along a parking lot (formerly occupied the First Baptist Church of Babylon) about 121 feet deep; its northern boundary bordering commercial property and forty two and a half feet wide; and on the eastern boundary bordering commercial property and 107 and a half feet deep.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Boundaries follow the historic lot lines.

Babylon Library
Babylon, Suffolk Co., New York

117 W. Main St.
Babylon, NY 11702



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



 Library

 NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY
Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Babylon Library
 Babylon, Suffolk Co., New York

117 W. Main St.
 Babylon, NY 11702



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
 Projection: Transverse Mercator
 Datum: North American 1983
 Units: Meter



Parks, Recreation
 and Historic Preservation

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Karen A. Kennedy & Sarah Bean Apmann, Architectural Historians

organization TKS Historic Resources, Inc.

date February 17, 2015

street & number 110 Cooper Street, #782

telephone 631-807-3889

city or town Babylon

state NY

zip code 11702

e-mail karen@tkshistoric.com/sarah@tkshistoric.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
 - **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)
-

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: The Babylon Library

City or Vicinity: Babylon

County: Suffolk State: NY

Photographer: Exteriors: S. Apmann & K. Kennedy Interiors: J. Betsworth

Date Photographed: January 2015 & February 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

NY_SuffolkCo_BabylonLibrary_0001
Façade, facing northwest

NY_SuffolkCo_BabylonLibrary_0002
Façade and East elevation, facing west

NY_SuffolkCo_BabylonLibrary_0003
West elevation, facing east

NY_SuffolkCo_BabylonLibrary_0004
Interior, Reading Room, facing southeast

NY_SuffolkCo_BabylonLibrary_0005
Interior, Reading Room, facing south

NY_SuffolkCo_BabylonLibrary_0006
Interior, Reception Room, facing north

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name The Village of Babylon, Office of the Mayor
street & number 153 West Main Street telephone 631-669-1212
city or town Babylon state NY 11702

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



HISTORICAL & PRESERVATION SOCIETY





A long, two-story cream-colored building with a grey roof and a central chimney. The building features several windows, including a prominent arched window decorated with a wreath. The building has a classic architectural style with a central section that is slightly taller than the wings on either side.

A dark grey sedan parked in the leftmost parking space. The car is viewed from the rear, showing its taillights and license plate.

A silver sedan parked in the middle parking space. The car is viewed from the rear, showing its taillights and license plate.

A silver SUV parked in the rightmost parking space. The car is viewed from the rear, showing its taillights and license plate.

RESERVED

RESERVED

RESERVED

RESERVED

RESERVED

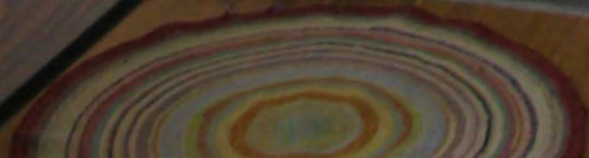
RESERVED







Franklin D. Roosevelt



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Babylon Library, The

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, Suffolk

DATE RECEIVED: 6/26/15 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 7/21/15
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/05/15 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/11/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000517

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 8.10.15 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.