

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

DRAFT

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 Lynbrook Public Library
other names/site number N/A
name of related multiple property listing N/A

Location

street & number 56 Eldert Street

N/A
N/A

 not for publication
city or town Lynbrook vicinity
state New York code county Nassau code 028 zip code 11563

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide X local

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ 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:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

☐ private
☒ public - Local
☐ public - State
☐ public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

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)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/Library

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/Library

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY

REVIVALS/Beaux Arts

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY

REVIVALS/Classical Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: concrete

walls: Concrete, brick

roof: Asphalt shingle

other:

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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

The Lynbrook Public Library, located at 56 Eldert Street in the Village of Lynbrook, Nassau County, is a largely intact Neoclassical Revival library building. It is an imposing civic structure that is characterized by grandeur of scale, symmetry, and simplicity of geometric forms as evidenced through its elevated first story, pedimented entrance, and full-story arched windows.

The library was designed by noted architectural firm Herts & Tallant, who were well known for their Beaux-Arts designs. While the firm is best known for their groundbreaking work in theatre design, they also designed residences, commercial buildings, and at least two extant libraries within the greater New York metro area. The library faces Eldert Street, where the prominent historic entrance features an elevated and pedimented double doorway. There is also an entrance on Carpenter Street via a rear 1960s addition. The library is one of the few examples of Beaux-Arts architecture that remain in the Village of Lynbrook.

Narrative Description

Setting and Location

The one-story Neoclassical Revival building is a classical block structure with a rectangular footprint and rests on a raised lawn edged by a low concrete curb set back from the Sidewalk on Eldert Street. Traditional landscaping of accent trees and shrubbery surround the foundation and cultivated grass lawn. Earth is banked up against the concrete foundation.

The library is strategically located within walking distance of most of the Village's commercial and institutional amenities (including the Lynbrook High School, Village Hall, churches, and businesses) as well as core residential areas. It is also accessible via private and public transportation, including the Long Island Rail Road's Babylon and Long Beach Lines. Its proximity to downtown, public transportation, and dense urban residential areas demonstrate a commitment to public accessibility, an ethos that was central to the Public Library Movement and development of free and accessible libraries.

The elevated first story is impressive in scale and detail and symmetrical in order. Consistent with Carnegie Libraries of the period, an elevated formal entrance welcomes patrons to enter through a prominent double doorway, accessed via a staircase symbolizing an individual's personal elevation by learning, and flanked by lampposts meant to symbolize enlightenment.

Exterior

The Library building consists of the basement, main floor, and mezzanine, and occupies 9,000 square feet. A terracotta base course divides the foundation from the next level of brickwork. The front

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elevation runs east-west along Eldert Street and features a vertically-tripart façade. The center of the façade projects from the rectangular footprint of the building with a three-sided grand staircase of artificial granite which leads to the main floor. Side wings are stepped back, drawing the eye to the main entrance. Centrally above the entry steps supporting the lintel are two large, fluted engaged Ionic columns topped by volutes with acanthus leaves on rectangular pedestals and circular bases. Within a large recesses brickwork arch a rectangular doorway frames the double glass doors which are decorated with a carved stone garland of acanthus leaves above which hang partially down the sides of the doorway and are held by two rosette medallions topped by keystones. Above the entrance, a fanlight window provide light to the vestibule. Within the vestibule, another fanlight and transom carry light to the interior. "Lynbrook Public Library" is carved into the lintel over the entrance, with a rosette on either side. Above the entrance, a dentilated pediment containing a relief bust of Palas Athena, the goddess of wisdom and war, wearing a Corinthian helmet with guardian gryphons surrounded by acanthus garlands is set against a recessed curved medallion frame. According to the program narrative for the opening of the Library by Mayor Howard G. Wilson, "In designing the Godess, strict attention was paid to her mythical accessories, the corset of scales represents her power in warfare, the head of the Gorgon Medusa according to legend was given to her by Perseus in return for her help in the attempt to slay Medusa, and the border of snakes is emblematic of wisdom."

Above the brickwork of the main level the entablature, slightly overhanging the main level, is divided into three parts: the lowest being the architrave, followed by the frieze, and cornice. Recessed from the center façade, a narrow section with a single long rectangular window, with a medallion above, is located on either side of the main entrance. Stepped back slightly, to emphasize the central section, the two wings each contain three large arches which are framed with a double layer of recessed brickwork accented at the top and sides with terracotta keystones. Each arch contains a long rectangular window topped by a fanlight. A terracotta sill course below the window level runs around the entire exterior.

The rear elevation is similarly divided into three sections, with the center divided by a large chimney. Each section to the sides contains a double row of three symmetrically placed windows with two symmetrically placed windows at ground level. The next, narrow section contains a single, long window at main level with a smaller window at ground-level. The side wing follows the symmetrical arrangement of the primary façade, containing three large arches with rectangular windows topped by fanlights.

At the center of the north-south elevations, above the sill course, are single, large Palladian Windows; the center arch of each is topped by a fanlight accented by radiating decorative framing. On the exterior, these windows are flanked by engaged columns and trimmed with thick ornamental terracotta molding with prominent keystones.

In 1992, a substantial nonhistoric addition was built to the rear of the original library building. This addition, which library administrators had advocated for as early as 1966, provided critical space for the expansion of library storage, programming, and access. It was designed by architects Bentel & Bentel, who intentionally oriented the addition to the rear of the 1929 library, preserving the historic façade and streetview of the original library. The exterior wall of the 1929 building serves as the interior wall of the 1992 addition. Access between buildings is provided by a set of arched glass doors centrally located within the 1929 building's south-facing wall. This addition was built of buff brick with repetitive stone belt courses to compliment the original library's building material and design. The glass-framed entry is set back from the sidewalk on a paved plaza; the irregular roofline is punctuated

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by a projecting, semi-circular skylight and a modest brick tower that shares a wall with the 1929 library building.

Interior

Corresponding to the exterior, all interior architectural elements are symmetrical throughout the building, radiating from the center. A prominent glass double door in the center of the façade leads to a vestibule at the main entrance (located on Eldert Street). Interior double wooden doors, topped by a transom, lead from the vestibule to the center of the large main room. A large brass chandelier hangs in the center of the room.

Thick crown molding frames the ceiling throughout the building. To the left and right of the main entrance are two sets of pilasters that meet the beams which run across the ceiling. East-west walls are symmetrically divided with built-in alcoves with added lighting which originally served as bookcases. These alternate with large windows topped by fanlights with arches framed by thick molding. Palladian windows at the North-South elevations occupy a large portion of the walls at either end of the main floor.

Opposite the Eldert Street entry is a set of glass double doors set within a deep barrel vault which lead to nonhistoric restrooms, an elevator, and a 1992 addition. Directly above the barrel-vaulted doorway is a glass enclosed mezzanine overlooking the main floor. The mezzanine currently houses a conference room and a research room.

The basement plan includes a boiler room and a large continual space divided into several smaller rooms. These rooms were originally library staff offices and program rooms. Today, the space holds a staff lunch room, restrooms, an office, and storage space.

A 1956 fire destroyed a large portion of original interior furnishings, but original architectural features were spared. In 1966, a Library survey suggested the need for additional space, resources, and updated services to accommodate a growing population. While relocating the library was considered, Village and Library officials determined to retain the original location with the addition of a rear extension on Carpenter Avenue. This addition was undertaken in 1992, at which point the majority of library stacks were relocated to this area.

The 1992 addition was intentionally designed to provide modern amenities and technologies to library patrons. Much like the 1929 library, the addition emphasizes natural light which is provided through a skylight tower and series of full-wall, multi-pane windows located on exterior walls of the building. This sense of open space is emphasized by the vaulted ceiling and layout. The majority of the first floor is one large, open room that houses library stacks, a central, semi-circular reference desk, and areas for reading and work. Library offices are housed in a half story that sits in a modest tower located adjacent to the 1929 library building.

Integrity

Despite additions in 1966 and 1992, the Lynbrook Public Library remains largely intact to its 1929 Neoclassical design. With the exception of modernizations in bathrooms and infrastructure, the original building generally remains unaltered from its 1929 appearance. The nonhistoric additions are

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oriented to the rear of the original library, which preserves the integrity of the building façade. The property retains integrity in terms of location, workmanship, design, feeling, and association.

Today the interior of the library retains its original floor plan and architectural details. A prominent glass double door in the center of the facade leads to a vestibule at the main Eldert Street entrance. An interior set of wooden double doors topped by a transom and half arch lead from the vestibule to the center of the large main room. The bays flanking the entrance are now used for storage. A grand piano to the left is used for concerts and performances. A large brass chandelier hangs in the center of the room. The original pendant lights have been replaced by sconces illuminating the ceiling.

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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.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1929-1965

Significant Dates

1956

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Herts & Tallant

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins with the year the building was designed and built, and ends with the year that all major interior and exterior alterations were completed. A 1956 fire destroyed interior features, and rehabilitation from this event was completed by 1965.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary) N/A

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Lynbrook Public Library located at 56 Eldert Street, Lynbrook, Nassau County is a well-preserved Neoclassical Revival structure characterized by grandeur of scale, symmetry and simplicity of geometric forms. In keeping with the traditions of public libraries, including Carnegie Libraries of the era, the building emphasizes classical Greek and Roman architecture in both style and symbolism.

The library is significant as a key civic institution reflecting the growth and urbanization of Lynbrook in the early 20th century, shaped by national trends in public education and the Public Library Movement. Established in 1913 by local women's organizations and later incorporated as a municipal institution, the library served as a center for learning, community engagement, and cultural enrichment. Its development paralleled the expansion of Lynbrook from a rural hamlet to a densely populated village, highlighting the increasing demand for public educational resources during this period.

Additionally, the Lynbrook Public Library is a distinguished example of institutional Neoclassical Revival design, influenced by the Beaux-Arts movement and the civic architectural principles of the Carnegie library era. Designed by architect Hugh Tallant, the building embodies the grandeur, symmetry, and decorative elements characteristic of early 20th-century public buildings, reinforcing its role as a symbol of knowledge and civic pride. The library remains a significant landmark, both as a physical representation of Lynbrook's historical development and as an enduring public resource for the community.

Narrative Description

Community History

The Village of Lynbrook is located within the homelands of the Munsee Lenape, including bands known as the Canarsie and Rockaway, and was referred to as Lakawe, meaning "place that is sandy." The Lenapehoking, as the Lenape identify their homelands, stretched across modern day New Jersey, parts of Pennsylvania and Delaware, and northward into the lower Hudson Valley. Following the traditional patterns of Lenape settlement, the area that became Lynbrook was used as hunting, fishing, and agricultural lands, as well as for trading, enabled in part by easy access to the Mill River. When Europeans first arrived on what would become Long Island, thousands of Indigenous people lived on the island. However, the Pequot War (1636-1638) destabilized Indigenous political and social institutions across New England and Long Island. At the same time, Dutch and European colonists began increasingly encroaching on Lenape lands which led to conflict. European understandings of land ownership typically assumed exclusive and permanent ownership over a geographic area while Lenape understandings of ownership were typically assumed communal land use that was temporary in nature. The combination of political unrest, ongoing violence, loss of land, and the introduction of new diseases decimated the Native American population on Long Island to the extent that, by the end of the seventeenth century, only a few hundred Indigenous people remained on Long Island. Today, Munsee Lenape remain on Long Island, though at a fraction of their original numbers. As a result of centuries of Native removal, many descendants now live within the Stockbridge Munsee Band of Mohicans (Wisconsin), Delaware Nation (Oklahoma), Delaware Tribe (Oklahoma), and in Moravian of the Thames and Munsee-Delaware Nation territories within Canada.

European colonists first settled what would become Lynbrook in 1641, naming their settlement Near Rockaway. The area developed largely under English oversight and was a rural, agricultural

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settlement. Long Island was home to both Patriots and Loyalists during the American Revolution, though the entire island was occupied by British forces for the majority of the war. Lynbrook was geographically removed from the 1776 Battle of Long Island (the Battle of Brooklyn), but experienced conflict along its June 1776 when Loyalists and Continental forces clashed near Hempstead Swamp.¹ By 1785, the settlement numbered 40 houses and, in 1790, a Methodist Church was constructed at the intersection of Ocean Avenue and Merrick Road. The settlement, which had formerly been known as Near Rockaway, became known as Parson's Corners, and small farms gradually spread westward toward the Five Corners at the intersection of Hempstead Avenue, Merrick Road, Broadway, and Atlantic Avenue. This area became known as Bloomfield.

Growth during the early nineteenth century was slow, and the area remained largely rural and agricultural. The largely barter economy was driven by shipping bulk agricultural products such as milled wheat and corn to New York City or, sometimes, to more distant ports. However, the Market Revolution substantially altered the fabric of the Lynbrook community. Between 1830 and 1840 Wright Pearsall, a young businessman from East Rockaway, opened a general store and post office at the Five Corners. This business became so prosperous that, by 1850, the Pearsall family owned almost all the land around the Five Corners and the intersection became known as Pearsall's Corners.² In 1853, Merrick Road was planked with hemlock boards and was made into a toll road.³ The establishment of this toll road meant that there were two options to travel between Lynbrook and New York City: by stagecoach and ferry, or by packet boat from East Rockaway.⁴

In 1867, the Southern Railroad extended its line through Pearsall's Corners, bringing about substantial changes to the greater community—including changing its name to Pearsalls. The proximity and rapid transit of the railroad enabled Lynbrook to pack and ship fresh farm produce and seafood directly to downtown Brooklyn and from there onto New York City in just a few hours, where ready markets purchased these items for cash. In February of 1882 alone, 356,350 pounds of oysters were exported via the Pearsalls railroad station.⁵ This expedited flow of goods was not only in one direction, though; dry goods stores, restaurants, and inns soon opened in Pearsalls and, by 1890, the hamlet had grown to over 2,000 residents, many of whom were daily rail commuters to jobs in downtown Brooklyn.⁶

On April 4, 1894, Pearsall's name was officially changed to Lynbrook, an anagram of "Brooklyn," highlighting the community's ties to this nearby urban center.⁷ Along with a new name, new improvement including gas mains, electricity, and telephone lines were connected in the 1890s. In 1911, the Village of Lynbrook was formally incorporated, marking the end of its existence as a rural hamlet. Within the next 20 years, bonds were issued to pave dirt roads with concrete, build a municipal building, and to construct an all-brick high school and library, and it became evident that the need for homes, entertainment venues, and business was increasing. By 1925, all remaining

¹ Art Mattson, "A Brief History of Lynbrook," History of Lynbrook Website, 2009, accessed 2/13/2025. http://lynhistory.com/#A_Brief_History_of_Lynbrook.

² Art Mattson, *The History of Lynbrook* (Lynbrook, NY: Lynbrook Historical Books, 2010), 35.

³ Mattson, *The History of Lynbrook*, 47.

⁴ Mattson, *The History of Lynbrook*, 6.

⁵ Mattson, *The History of Lynbrook*, 19.

⁶ Mattson, *The History of Lynbrook*, 6.

⁷ According to *The History of Lynbrook* by local historian Art Mattson, local residents objected to this renaming and insisted on continuing to refer to the community as Pearsalls for another 25 years.

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farmland within the village limits had been subdivided into business and housing lots, and Lynbrook was named the fastest growing village in Nassau County.⁸ In the following years, the new library, village hall, recreation center, and community pool were constructed. The population doubled between 1920 and 1925; and has subsequently hovered around 20,000 since 2000.⁹

During this time of growth in the 1920s, Lynbrook became increasingly urban with a community that required access to educational facilities and materials. Several elementary schools and a high school were built, though it became clear that extracurricular educational and civic resources were required. Changing demographics, tax-supported funding, philanthropy, and an increased interest in education brought the Public Library Movement to towns across the United States. Although libraries existed for many years, they were run by private associations, often charging fees. An increasing demand for free, open, and accessible libraries, known as the Public Library Movement (or Free Library Movement) had begun sweeping the United States as early as the 1840s. By the late nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, however, the Public Library Movement combined with increasing urbanization, growing social movements, and the emergence of civic architectural style and was felt within communities across the nation. This confluence of movements was felt in Lynbrook specifically through the building of the Lynbrook Public Library.

Social Reform, the Public Library Movement, & Civic Architecture

Since its beginnings the Lynbrook Public Library has been more than a physical building. It is an integral part of the community, a gathering place, and a repository for resources. The founding of the library grew out of social change and it continually evolves and responds to changes in society, technology, and community needs. The Lynbrook community reflects the national trends of urbanization and heightened consciousness of education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As the railroad and trolley brought many new residents to the area, Lynbrook, like many other towns and villages thought the nation, moved from a largely agrarian, rural community to an increasingly urban area. The Public Library Movement arose from these social and political changes including growth in the economy enabling government support of cultural institutions and philanthropic funding. Branch libraries spread throughout the country as communities required local resources and services to meet the needs of the growing populations. Like many of these public libraries, the Lynbrook Public Library had its beginnings in local women's groups. The origins of the Lynbrook Public Library can be traced to the Friday Club, a women's literary organization founded in 1902. As early as 1906 the Friday Club had planned to open a free library accessible to the community at large. Their plans, however, were delayed by a financial panic in 1907 as funding tightened. These plans were realized in 1913 when a Founders Committee of twelve Lynbrook women, including many members of the Friday Club, opened the Lynbrook Free Library in Mechanics Hall on Blake Avenue. At the time of its opening, the library housed 500 books. After acquiring additional books, in 1915 they moved to a larger space in the Ronalds Building located on Atlantic Avenue. Between 1914 and 1924, the oversight and management of the library was wholly overseen by a group of twelve volunteer women from the community.¹⁰

In 1916, seeing the growth and interest, and realizing the civic value of a library, the Village Board renamed the original library the "Lynbrook Public Library" and voted to subsidize the library's expenses.¹¹ In 1921, the founders organized a fundraising drive through cake sales and donations for a down payment of the

⁸ Mattson, *The History of Lynbrook*, 63.

⁹ Mattson, *The History of Lynbrook*, 65.

¹⁰ Many of these women, alongside members of the Friday Club and Founding Committee were also active within the women's suffrage movement, and many suffrage events and meetings were held at the various Lynbrook Library buildings.

¹¹ Mattson, *The History of Lynbrook*, 104.

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library's first owned building located at the intersection of Broadway and Merrick Road. The library continued to grow, hiring its first professional librarian in 1924. By the late 1920s it became evident that a new and dedicated library space was required.

In September of 1928, Lynbrook taxpayers voted to fund half the land for a new library building. The remaining half was donated by Tredwell Carpenter of Rockville Centre. On August 17, 1929 the taxpayers of Lynbrook passed a referendum that the sum of \$20,000 be raised by a bond issue for the purchase of books and equipment.¹² Theresa A. Guertin, a paid librarian, was appointed to organize the new Library, with the aid of Ella E. Cook.¹³ As community interest grew, the staff was enlarged and hours increased. At this time the first Library Board of Trustees was appointed. The library opened to the public in 1929 and received its charter from the Board of Regents of the State of New York in 1930. The book collection was increased each year by 1,200 to 1,500 volumes.¹⁴ The Founders Association and the Friday Club, many of whose members were the original founders, never lost interest in the library and continued making donations of furniture and equipment as needed. During the succeeding years, the circulation continued to rise and at the height of the Great Depression, the circulation reached approximately 100,000 volumes. By 1936, the hours of the library were increased to sixty a week. Additional equipment and furniture were added to increase the capacity for accessions. Interest in children's materials also prompted new additions to the collection.¹⁵

This increased interest in publicly accessible civic resources also extended to their architectural design. The prevalence of Beaux-Arts style civic buildings, with their emphasis on grandness of scale and interior organization, made them ideal designs for communities who wished to communicate the importance of education and self-betterment. The Public Library Movement, alongside the development of philanthropic public Carnegie Libraries heavily influenced the design of libraries, as well as schools and municipal buildings. The design of libraries during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, though, were particularly inspired by the designs favored by Andrew Carnegie. The Scottish-born American businessman, founder of the Carnegie Steel Company which later became U.S. Steel is known for having built some of the most powerful and influential corporations in United States history, and later in his life, for giving away most of his riches to fund the establishment of many libraries, schools, and universities in Scotland, America, and worldwide.

A total of 2,509 Carnegie libraries—libraries built with money donated by Andrew Carnegie—were built between 1883 and 1929. The Carnegie philosophy was that support of industrious individual achievement leads to the betterment of the individual, the community and society as a whole, an ideal that was reflected across society at a variety of levels during this period. The importance of Carnegie donations for public library buildings in the United States lies in their timing, during the height of public library expansion. His requirement that each community provide a site and a pledge to support the new library through local taxation widened the acceptance of the principle that local government was responsible for funding and operating public libraries. Carnegie's initiative also stimulated other library

¹² Howard G. Mason, "Opening Night Address," (Speech, Lynbrook Public Library), transcript held at Lynbrook Public Library Archives, 1929.

¹³ Mattson, *The History of Lynbrook*, 110.

¹⁴ Mattson, *The History of Lynbrook*, 74.

¹⁵ Mattson, *The History of Lynbrook*, 75.

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benefactions by many local philanthropists.¹⁶ As an institution unique to each community, the library reflects the community and ongoing community support and involvement is a fundamental component.¹⁷ In many cases, Carnegie libraries or libraries in general were the most imposing structure in particularly small or rural communities. Although the Lynbrook Public Library is not a Carnegie-funded library, it reflects the classical revival style and traditions of the Carnegie libraries, both in its philosophy of community support and involvement and in its impressive presence in the village.

Architectural Significance

The Lynbrook Public Library is a largely intact example of institutional Neoclassical Revival architecture emblematic of early twentieth-century design (Figure 1). It is characterized by monumental presence, grandeur of scale, hierarchical arrangement of elements, symmetry, proportion, geometric forms, and balance. Features include a central pedimented entrance, symmetrical and evenly spaced elements, large windows topped by fanlights to illuminate the interior, arches, a flat roof, and classical symbolism and inscriptions. Aside from decorative elements, the arrangement of the floorplan is orderly and functional (Figures 2-4).

Following the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, architects who studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts brought a new architectural style to the United States. Named for the school, Beaux-Arts style architecture became a prominent architectural style across the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. With its grand treatment of classic architectural forms focusing on the volume of spaces, it was seen as an idea expression of both corporate and civic pride. Buildings of this style are both formal and monumental with abundant and opulent decorative details. It was especially suited to public buildings designed to deliver a strong symbolic message, such as libraries, museums, court houses, train stations, college buildings, post offices, schools, and government offices. Beaux-Arts decorative elements often include sculptural decoration designed to communicate the purpose and identity of the building through details including the names and faces of notable individuals, mythological, or allegorical figures. Beaux-Arts architecture, however, was not purely decorative. The buildings were designed to function in harmony with their environment and with the people who use the building. Both the interior and the exterior were symmetrically arranged, the interior floor plan designed around a central axis with organized areas to allow the flow of people throughout the building (Figure 5).

The Lynbrook Public Library incorporates decorative elements of Beaux-Arts and the order of Palladian design. In keeping with grand public buildings of the era, the classical rectangular structure has a raised first story, is impressive in scale and detail and is symmetrical and hierarchical in order. It recalls classical influence in both design and symbolism. The building displays the signature Carnegie elements of classical revival architecture. An elevated formal entrance welcomes patrons to enter through a prominent doorway, accessed via a staircase symbolizing a person's elevation by learning, flanked by lampposts to symbolize enlightenment.¹⁸ Above the entrance, a fanlight window and transom provide light to the vestibule. Within the vestibule another fanlight and transom carry light to the interior. "Lynbrook Public Library" is carved into the lintel centered over the entrance with a rosette on either side. Above the entrance, a dentil-trimmed pediment, containing a recessed curved medallion frame, a relief bust of Pallas Athena, goddess of wisdom and war, wearing a Corinthian helmet, represented with her symbolic snakes surrounded by acanthus garlands. According to the program narrative for the opening of the Library by Mayor Howard G. Wilson: "In designing the

¹⁶ Abigail A. van Slyck; "The Utmost Amount of Effectiv [sic] Accommodation": Andrew Carnegie and the Reform of the American Library. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 1 December 1991; 50 (4): 359–383.

¹⁷ Van Slyck, 345.

¹⁸ Abigail A. van Slyck; "The Utmost Amount of Effectiv [sic] Accommodation": Andrew Carnegie and the Reform of the American Library. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 1 December 1991; 50 (4): 374.

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goddess, strict attention was paid to her mythical accessories, the corset of scales represents her power in warfare, the head of the Gorgon Medusa, according to legend was given to her by Perseus in return for her help in the attempt to slay Medusa, and the border of snakes, emblematic of wisdom.”¹⁹

The Library was designed by architect Hugh Tallant, who was born in Nantucket and attended the French school of architecture, Ecole des Beaux-Arts on Harvard’s Kirkland Fellowship. He won the 1896 Grande Medaille d’Honneur for graduating first in his class, and met his future partner, Henry B. Herts, while a student.²⁰ Herts and Tallant opened offices in Parish and New York in 1900, with Tallant focusing on decorative design of projects and Herts focusing on engineering. They became widely recognized for their work in theatre design, utilizing decorative and ornate Beaux-Art elements to emphasize visual interest. Their best-known theatre projects include the Art Nouveau New Amsterdam Theatre, the Lyceum Theatre which features an elaborate Beaux-Arts façade, the Liberty Theatre (1904), the Gaiety (1909), the Folies-Bergere (1911). They are also well known for their design of the Brooklyn Academy of Music (1908) and the Rice Mansion. The firm dissolved in 1911 and each partner went on to other architectural associations.

Herts & Tallant are primarily recognized for their theatre design and, to a limited extent, their residential design, though they also designed a limited number of institutional buildings. Indeed, research indicates that there may be only two remaining extant libraries designed by Herts & Tallant: Lynbrook Public Library and the Aguilar Branch of the New York Public Library.²¹ The Aguilar Branch, originally the Aguilar Free Library, is notable for being doubly designed by Herts & Tallant. The firm beat out notable architects including Oscar Lewinson, Henri Fouchaux, and Robert D. Kohn in 1899 for the original design of the library, located on East 110th Street.²² This initial building was designed in a late Romanesque Revival style blended with Art Nouveau Elements. It was designed to be three stories with a symmetrical façade faced in rusticated limestone, featuring a large limestone entry arch and an “intricate, recessed three-story, three-bay cast iron screen.”²³ This use of cast iron is particularly notable, as Herts & Tallant had not previously experimented with this design medium. The library quickly outgrew its space, though, and by 1903 it had been absorbed by the New York Public Library system who determined that the building required renovation to meet growing needs.²⁴ While the overall design of the original façade, including pronounced limestone enframements with a central, three-bay cast iron screen punctuated by prominent windows, was retained, the overall style was updated to reflect a Neoclassical Revival sentiment. These updates, also designed by Herts & Tallant, included “colossal flanking pilasters supporting an entablature and enclosing orders of engaged iron colonnettes,” resulting in an imposing façade. Significantly, both library projects were funded in part by Andrew Carnegie.

While the Lynbrook Public Library was designed nearly thirty years later, it features notable similarities to the Aguilar Branch. Both facades are dominated by colossal limestone pilasters with

¹⁹ Mattson, *The History of Lynbrook*, 115.

²⁰ Mattson, *The History of Lynbrook*, 84.

²¹ The Aguilar Branch underwent a substantial renovation in 1993, resulting in some loss of architectural integrity. The building is currently in the process of interior renovation.

²² “New York Public Library, Aguilar Branch,” Landmarks Preservation Commission, June 25, 1996, Designation List 273.

²³ “New York Public Library, Aguilar Branch,” 2.

²⁴ “New York Public Library, Aguilar Branch,” 2.

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Ionic capitals which frame a recessed entry portal. Likewise, both entrances are topped by a prominent lintel engraved with the library's name and surrounded by classical imagery relating to knowledge and enlightenment. The emphasized and oversized windows prominent on both buildings, though differing in style, are also notable, and demonstrate the firm's mastery over classical form and practical use—the symmetry, grand scale, and decorative features of the windows are balanced by the practicality of providing ample natural light to the interior reading rooms. The interiors of both buildings favor a large reading room immediately accessible from the main entry, and both feature prominent mezzanines which provide access to second floor spaces.

The Library Survey of 1966 suggested additional space and services to serve the rapidly growing community. Architects Bentel and Bentel were retained in 1982 to study the feasibility of constructing a new Library on Merrick Road. The expansion of the Library continued as a community issue into the 1986 Village election campaign when the challenger, from a family of Library employees, strongly advocated expanding the original building. While he was narrowly defeated, an advisory committee formed and ultimately recommended an addition to the original building. Following the finalization of the architect's plans and bidding, bonds were raised and construction began in 1990 and completed in 1992 thereby preserving the 1929 Neoclassical building as a Library for generations to appreciate. Collective community activism to save the Library is a tribute to the importance of this historic structure. Today, the Library continues to evolve, reflecting and adapting to the ever-changing needs of the community.

Conclusion

The Lynbrook Public Library is an important example of not only an institutional design by architects Hers & Tallant, but also of Neoclassical architecture within the Village of Lynbrook. It is representative of the importance of architecture, community engagement, and social progress. Its Neoclassical Revival design embodies these ideals, as demonstrated through its imposing presence, symmetrical form, and classical design elements which communicate its significance within the community as a center of knowledge and public gathering. Beyond its architectural singularity within the community, the library has played an essential role in the Lynbrook community's social and intellectual development, evolving to meet the changing needs of its patrons. The institution, rooted in the Public Library Movement, remains committed to accessibility, lifelong learning, and civic responsibility, and serves as a living symbol of Lynbrook's civic history.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Carletta, David Mark. "The Triumph of American Spectacle: New York City's 1892 Columbian Celebration." *Material Culture* 40, no. 1 (2008): 19-40.

Mattson, Art. *The History of Lynbrook*. Lynbrook, NY: Lynbrook Historical Books, 2010.

Moore, Abbot Halstead. "Individualism in Architecture: The Works of Herts and Tallant." *Architectural Record* 15, no. 1 (1904): 54-91.

Morrison, Bill. "The Theatres of Herts & Tallant." *Marquee: The Journal of the Theatre Historical Society* 22, no. 4 (1990): 3-22.

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van Slyck, Abigail A. "The Utmost Amount of Effectiv [sic] Accommodation": Andrew Carnegie and the Reform of the American Library. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 1 December 1991; 50 (4): 359–383.

Landmarks Preservation Commission. "New York Public Library, Aguilar Branch." June 25, 1996. Designation List.

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 # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.26

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 40.654159 | Longitude: -73.674187 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

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

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kathleen Curran (Lynbrook Public Library); Sara Evenson (NYSHPO)

Lynbrook Public Library

Name of Property

Monroe County, NY

County and State

organization NYSHPO

date 2/25/2025

street & number 1 Delaware Ave

telephone 518-971-0501

city or town Cohoes

state NY

zip code 12047

e-mail Sara.Evenson@parks.ny.gov

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.

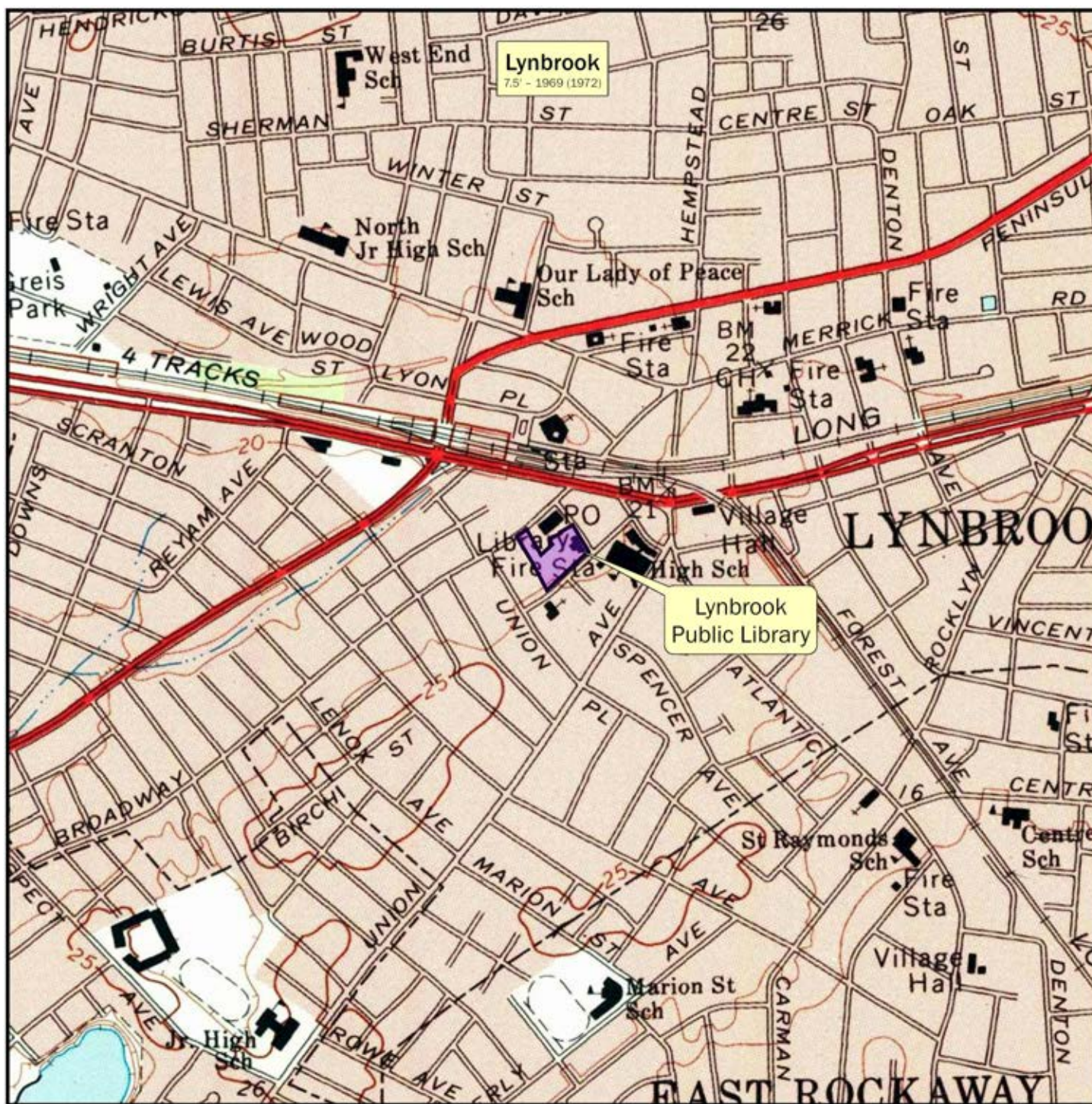
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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1:12,000

0 500 1000 ft



Lynbrook Public Library



New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation

Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N

Mapped 02/10/2025 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

Lynbrook Public Library

Name of Property

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1:1,200

0 50 100 ft



Nomination Boundary (2.26 ac)



New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation

Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N

New York State Orthoimagery Year: 2022

Mapped 02/10/2025 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

Lynbrook Public Library

Name of Property

Monroe County, NY

County and State



1:1,200

0 50 100 ft

Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N



Nomination Boundary (2.26 ac)



Tax Parcels

Nassau County Parcel Year: 2023



**New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation**

Mapped 02/10/2025 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

Lynbrook Public Library

Name of Property

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County and State

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: Lynbrook Public Library

City or Vicinity: Lynbrook

County: Nassau

State: NY

Photographer: Various

Date Photographed: June 2024; February 2025

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

001 of 013: Façade

002 of 013: Northeaster Corner

003 of 013: Southwestern Corner with Addition Visible

004 of 013: 1992 Addition

005 of 013: Detail of Decorative Pediment Design

006 of 013: Interior of Reading Room

007 of 013: Interior of Reading Room with Original Trim; Doorway to Addition

008 of 013: Interior of Reading Room with Original Front Door

009 of 013: Palladian Window

010 of 013: Exterior of Addition

011 of 013: Interior of Addition Skylight

012 of 013: Interior of Addition Reading Room

013 of 013: Reference Desk in Addition Reading Room

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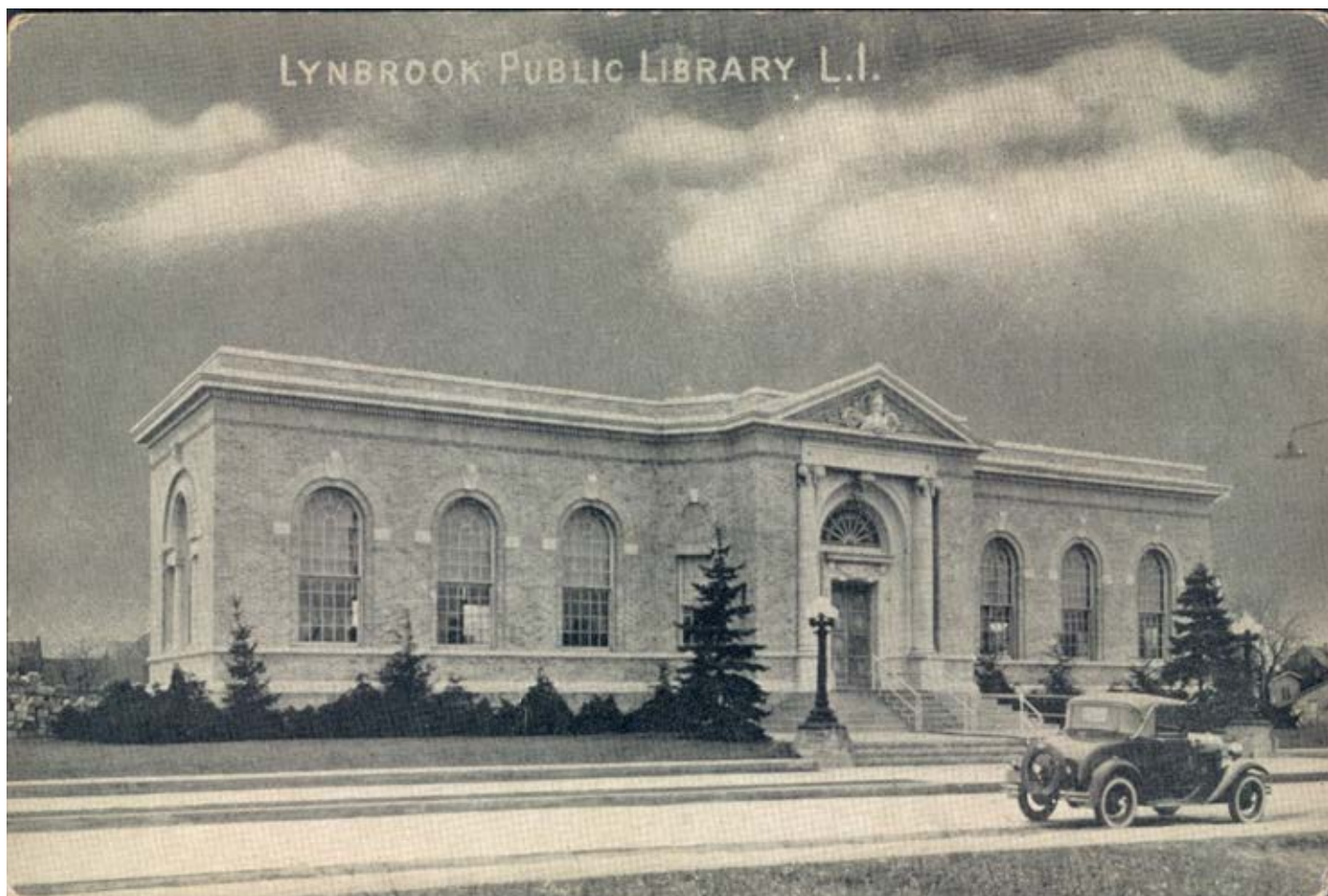


Figure 1. Historical postcard of Lynbrook Library.

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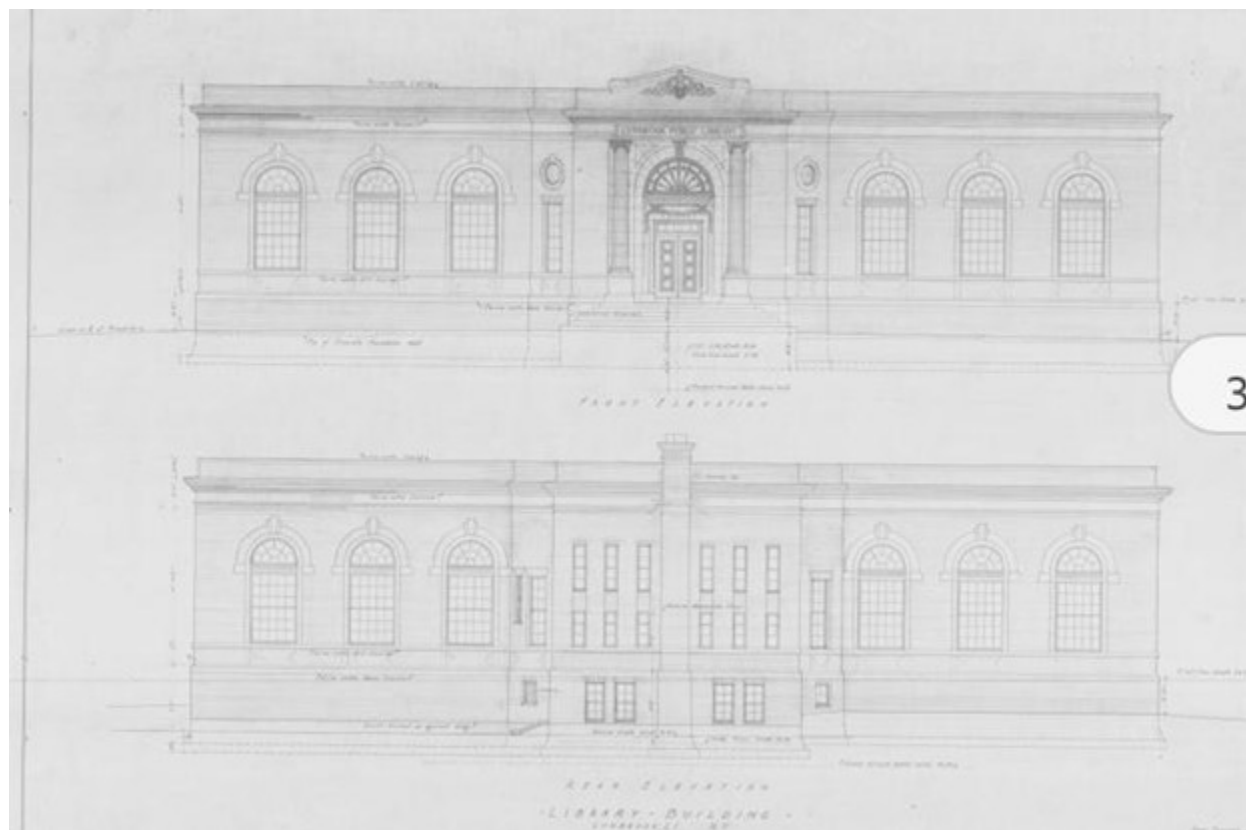


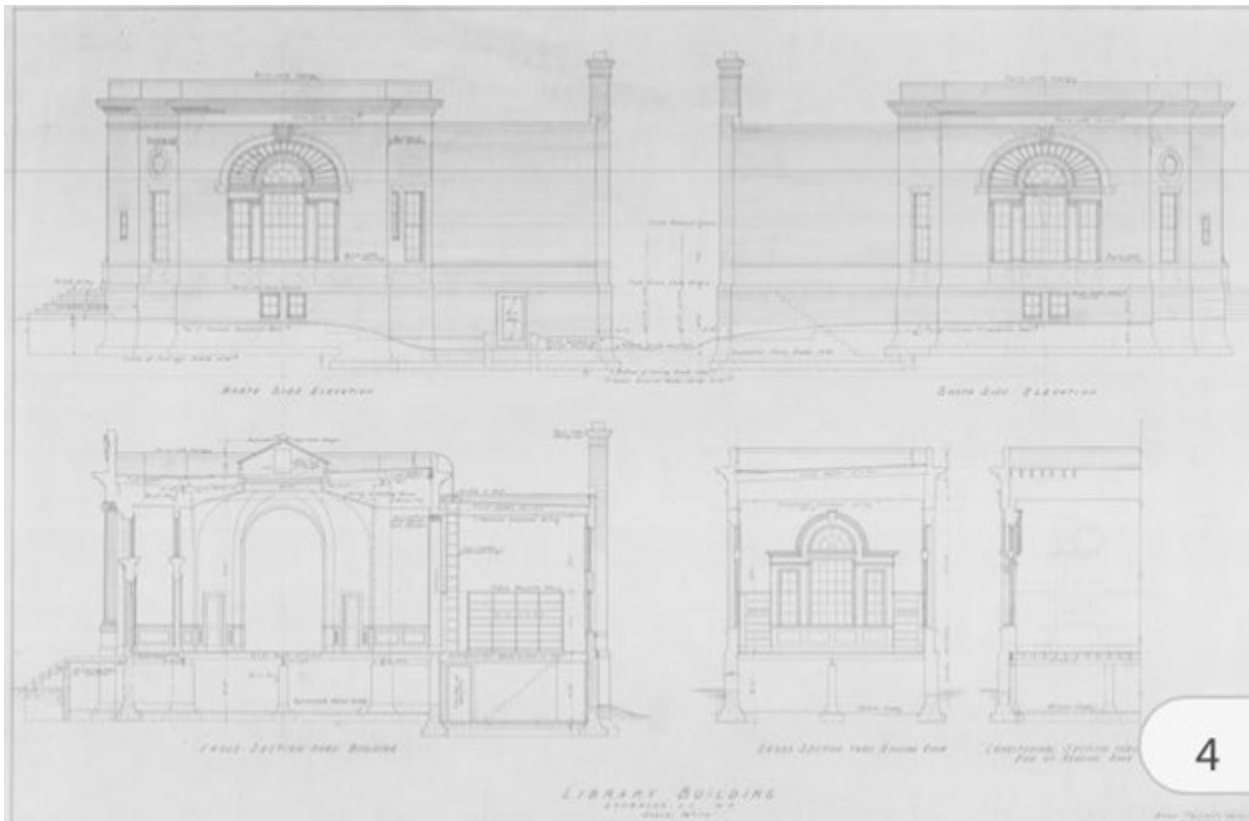
Figure 2. Architectural Drawings of library exterior.

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Figure 3 . Architectural Drawings of library exterior.

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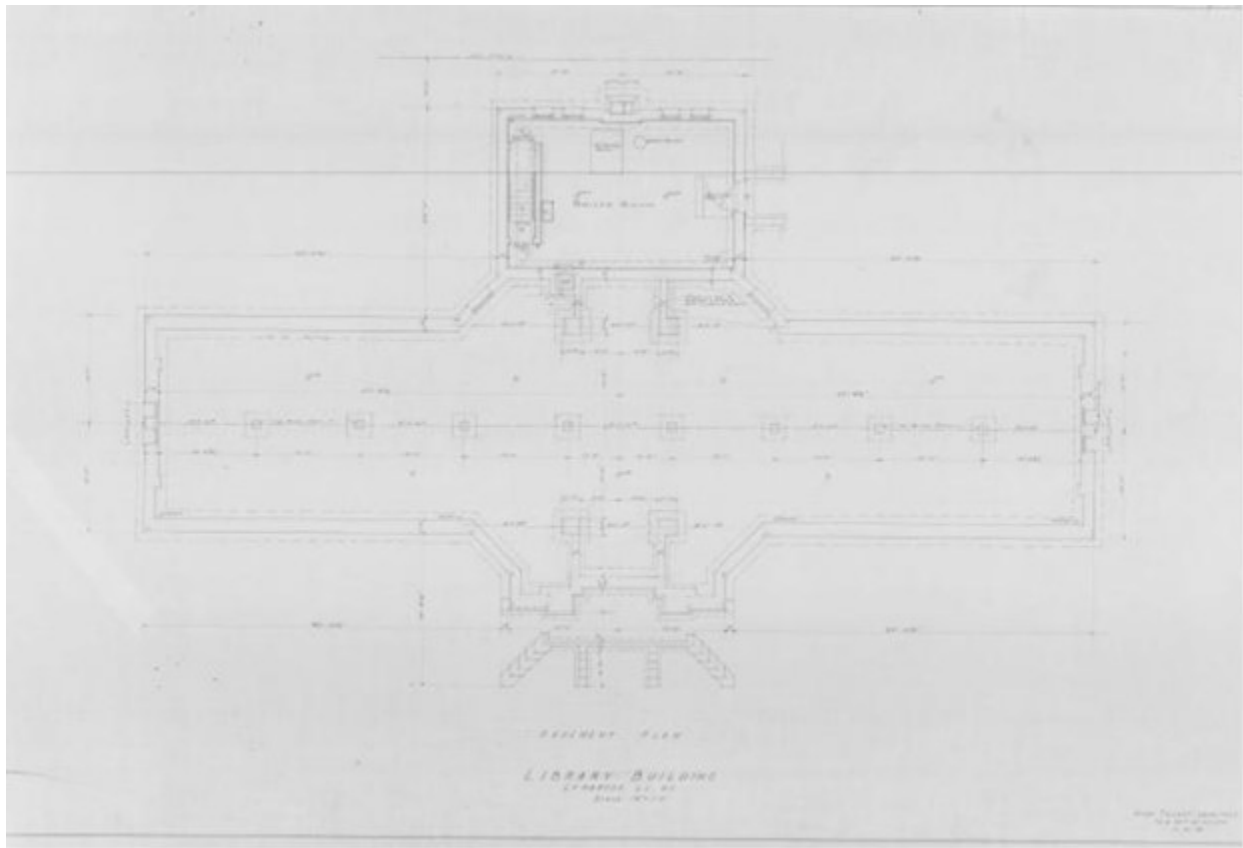


Figure 4 . Architectural Drawings of library interior.

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Figure 5. Interior photo of library, 1956.

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Figure 5. Exterior photo of 1992 addition.

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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.