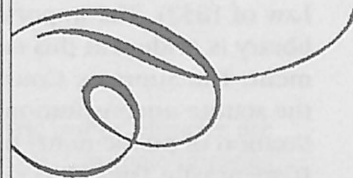


THE BRICKS AND MORTAR OF INFORMATION: PRESERVING INDIANA'S HISTORIC PUBLIC LIBRARIES

by Ryan T. Schwier



Over the last century historic preservation has had a lasting impact on protecting our institutions of information. Indiana's public libraries have successfully nurtured our state's cultural heritage and preserved our scholarly resources while promoting access to information.

As library service expands to meet modern demands, historic libraries have greater hurdles to overcome when trying to adapt. The focus of this article is the *process* of adaptation. An historic overview of public libraries and preservation efforts is a foundation for understanding the development of Indiana historic public library preservation. A section on pursuing library preservation and an annotated bibliography of resources is provided for further reference.

I. DEFINITIONS

Definitions of public libraries and historic libraries are based on state and federal statutes and regulations and published federal notices. Public libraries are municipal corporations (Indiana Code Ann. §36-12-1-5, 2006) that select, maintain, organize, interpret, and disseminate recorded knowledge for the public's recreational, informational, educational, research, or cultural needs (590 Indiana Admin. Code 1-2.5-2, 2006). Historic libraries are structures older than fifty years (National Register Criteria [NRC], 2006) and are significant to American history, architecture, or culture at the local, state, or national level (Federal Register Notice, 1983). The terms "public libraries," "historic libraries," or "libraries" generally, will be used in this article to define historic public libraries. Specific examples are noted.

Preservation of public libraries as structures should be distinguished from digital preservation of historic documents housed within the library. Historic preservation is defined as the "act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property" (Secretary of the Interior's Standards, 1995). Its effect is designed to revitalize living communities and sustain a collective memory of our past. The process is a collabo-

orative effort of architects, librarians, historians, state and federal government agencies, and the general public.

II. A BRIEF HISTORY OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN INDIANA

The concept of a public library system goes back to pioneer days and the establishment of statehood in the early 1800s. Quasi-public libraries began as subscription or membership libraries that were limited to serving a small number of select patrons. The Vincennes Library Company, a prominent example of several local variations, was chartered by territorial legislation in 1806 and run by the local business and professional classes (Constatine, 1970). As demand grew for subscription libraries, membership expanded to include members of the working class. Library collections were eventually made available to the general public through a rental system, where borrowing was extended to non-members requiring a payment of nominal fees (Constatine).

HISTORIC LEGAL OVERVIEW

Indiana's constitution laid the foundation for library laws through direct provision or legislative interpretation. The original 1816 Constitution contained a clause for a county library system, designating short-term proceeds for such and calling for the "establishment of rules and regulations to secure its permanence and extend its benefits" (Indiana Constitution of 1816). The adoption of Indiana's current constitution in 1851 made certain revisions to education laws, laying the groundwork for a free and public common school system at the township level (Indiana Constitution 1851). Any provisions relating to public libraries were left out entirely, permitting subsequent legislation to determine their role.

Acts in 1816 and 1818 incorporated the existing subscription and county libraries (1816 Indiana Acts 156 as cited in Constatine and 1818 Indiana Acts 105 as cited in Constatine), however, by mid-century many had failed. Lack of continued financial support was manifest through earlier legislative failures to sanction long-term funds (Constatine). In compliance with

education provisions established under the 1851 constitution, the 1852 School Law provided townships the right to vote on taxes supporting the maintenance of schools, including their affiliated libraries (School Law of 1852). The importance of a publicly funded library is evident at this early stage of legal development. The Supreme Court of Indiana, however, found the statute unconstitutional for not applying uniform taxation of public funds throughout the state (*Greencastle Township v. Black*, 1854). The case was widely cited and ultimately overruled on other grounds. It remains a key example of the complexity of taxation issues affiliated with public libraries.

Legislation during the early 20th century implemented additional tax measures for continued support (*Towns and Cities Libraries Act*, 1901 & *County Library Law*, 1917). The 1947 Public Library Act is the foundation to Indiana's modern public library law. Designed to unify laws governing all public libraries of the state (*Library Law of 1947*, 1273), the act declared all library districts as public corporations. Library District Boards, upon petition of county residents, were granted powers to levy taxes (*Library Law of 1947*). The act also established the current system of public library classification to maximize local autonomy (*Library Law of 1947*).

EARLY BENEFACTORS

Indiana has been a prized beneficiary of library philanthropic efforts. The contributions of two benefactors are noted. William Maclure, a scholar of Scottish origins, helped plan a community of progressive education methods and social living in New Harmony, Indiana, in 1827 (McBride, 1967). The original community failed; however, Maclure's library legacy survived. In his will he left funds to support the construction of 146 public libraries throughout Indiana (McBride) for the use of primarily working class patrons (McPherson, 2003). Many of the Maclure libraries were eventually absorbed into the municipal library system (Banta, 1958), but only one would survive. The Workingmen's Institute of New Harmony, Indiana, established in 1838, has been restored and continues to serve as a public library (New Harmony, 2007).

Often referred to as the "Patron Saint of Libraries," Andrew Carnegie laid the foundation to the enduring, modern day public library. Indiana received more Carnegie grants for public libraries than any other state in the Union (McPherson, 2003). Two important aspects distinguished the Carnegie Library from all other public libraries: the concept of public service without the traditional, established social hierarchy and the reform in professional standards of library architecture and design (Van Slyck, 1991). The latter concept has had a lasting impact on historic preservation efforts

among local communities and will be discussed in detail below.

III. A BRIEF HISTORY OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Early preservation movements of the 19th century emerged as the country witnessed the neglect and loss of landmarks associated with the country's founding. Properties that were identified with historic persons or events were seen as tangible links to recent history. Preservation began as a method of public education under the context of historic association (Scarpino, 2006).

By the mid-20th century, following the Second World War, the preservation movement began to shift due to social and technological forces. Urban centers were being abandoned for the suburbs. The federal government responded with well intended but environmentally disruptive programs including interstate highway and urban renewal projects (Murtagh, 2006). These programs had a negative impact on historic preservation efforts by increasing wide-scale destruction of historically significant structures (Murtagh, 2006).

Preservation efforts began to focus on the places and communities in which people lived. In particular, such efforts focused on buildings and landscapes that could retain a modern, functional use (Scarpino, 2006). Citizens and local, non-governmental organizations, including historical societies and neighborhood associations, mobilized their endeavors to save their historic neighborhoods. Federal and state government acknowledged these efforts and implemented laws designed for the protection and recognition of historic properties.

FEDERAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION LAW

Historic preservation law is a strategic federal-state partnership that encourages decentralization and stronger management at local levels. Efforts to protect cultural resources in the early 20th century were established in various federal statutes and regulations, agency standards, and executive orders. In 1966, the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) formed the modern legal landscape. Set up under the National Park Service, the act authorizes states to designate programs to submit preservation requests to the federal level (National Historic Preservation Act ([NHPA] 16 U.S.C. § 470 et seq., 2000). State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs) are directed to set up a state preservation plan, survey historic properties, and educate the public (NHPA 16 U.S.C. § 470a(b), 2000). The NHPA created the National Register of Historic Places, a national inventory of historic properties maintained for purposes of honorary recognition (NHPA 16 U.S.C. § 470a, 2000). Section 106 of the act

provides protection consideration of properties listed on the Register before any state or federal projects threaten destruction or alteration (Pub. L. 89-665, 1966).

INDIANA HISTORIC PRESERVATION LAW

In 1919, the Indiana Department of Conservation was formed to protect and administer historic memorials, artifacts, and properties (1919 Indiana Acts 375; repealed 1965, as cited by Indiana Department of Natural Resources [IDNR]-DHPA History). Renamed the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in 1965 (Indiana Code §14-9-1-1 as cited by IDNR-DHPA Hist.), the director was designated as the Indiana SHPO under the responsibilities of the NHPA (IDNR-DHPA Hist.). Following federal trends of urban renewal during the 1950s and 1960s, local preservation groups throughout Indiana responded to the loss of historically significant properties.

The current state historic preservation program, administered through the Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology (Indiana's SHPO), was established in 1981 under the DNR (1981 Indiana Acts 1323). Local regulation of historic preservation is authorized under Indiana Code §36-7-11 (2006), enabling city and community commissions to pass preservation ordinances. Local ordinances hold the most authority over historic property protection and should be consulted before any renovation projects.

IV. PRESERVING INDIANA'S HISTORIC PUBLIC LIBRARIES

OVERVIEW

Over the past century public libraries have had a significant role in historic preservation. The relationship combines unique aspects of architecture, state law, demographics, technology, and modern use. Public libraries have endured years of neglect only to be restored as a testament to the original notion of their permanence in society (Frye, 1993).

Official recognition of historic properties is identified by standards of integrity and significance of historical contribution (NRC). National Register nominations require historic properties to meet at least one of four criteria for significance. These include:

1. Association to significant historical events;
2. Association to significant historical persons;
3. Embodiment of characteristics that represent a type, period, method of construction, the work of a master, or that display high artistic value; and
4. Production or discovery of information important to history or prehistory (National Register Criteria for Evaluation, 2006; also see 48 Fed. Reg. 44,739

for definition of integrity). Because historic libraries tend to meet one or more of the required criteria for evaluation, they are typically the first buildings in local communities to be nominated and listed (Jones, 1997).

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

Architectural styles of historic public libraries are unique in their design and layout. Carnegie libraries are highlighted here based on their prominence, high survival rate, and overall recognition.

Early libraries of the 19th century were often designed as institutions of grandiose character (Van Slyck, 1991). Collections were organized with restrictive access to the public. Closed stacks were common, and other layout features did not accommodate general patron use (Van Slyck). Debate was common over design principles between prominent architects glorifying style and aesthetics and professional librarians promoting efficiency and practical access (Van Slyck).

Carnegie libraries were revolutionary in their open access design. Architectural standards were not developed by Carnegie nor were they required for his library grants (Van Slyck, 1991). Instead, importance was placed on economy and efficiency. Open floor plans were encouraged by a pamphlet circulated to all communities receiving grants. The pamphlet, *Notes on the Erection of Library Buildings*, a publication developed by Carnegie's secretary, James Bertram, was based on a combined analysis and critique of architects and librarians (Van Slyck). The specialties of diverse, local architects, uniquely interpreting the *Notes*, helped develop a balance of function and design quality that has had a permanent affect on library construction. The Indianapolis Marion County Public Library-Spades Park Branch, dedicated in 1912, provides a unique example (this Carnegie Library and others can be viewed at the Indiana Historical Society's digital image collections at www.indianahistory.org). It is the only Indiana Carnegie Library with an Italianesque architectural style (McPherson, 2003). Three floors of open design include a second story auditorium, unusual in a Carnegie library.

DESTRUCTION AND NEGLECT

Early public libraries, including Carnegies, were constructed with minimal anticipation of patron growth and subsequent expansion (Frye, 1993). Advances in technology made it difficult for historic libraries to adapt. Early renovation that did occur was limited to maintaining structural integrity and only sporadically supported by community fundraising (Jones, 1997). Continued financial support was not a priority, particularly during the Depression. Later attempts of renova-

tion and expansion during the 1930s and 1940s were poorly executed with little or no regard for aesthetic or historic integrity (Jones). These factors facilitated the eventual destruction of hundreds of public libraries. One example is the Carnegie Library of Kokomo, Indiana. To accommodate a growing population, it was demolished in 1965 to make way for the new public library (McPherson, 2003).

PURSUING HISTORIC LIBRARY PRESERVATION

Preservation can take two approaches depending on available time and resources. The most practical and cost-efficient method is taking advantage of the protection clause under Section 106 of the NHPA. To apply, properties must first be listed with the National Register of Historic Places. In most cases, librarians or local historians can prepare nomination forms for consideration. Listing on the Indiana Register of Historic Sites and Structures is an alternative to its national counterpart and may require less documentation and effort (Indiana Register, 2006). The protection review process is not as comprehensive as Section 106, but a certificate of approval is required from the Indiana Preservation Review Board before alteration or demolition may occur (Indiana Code Ann. §14-21-1-18, 2006). Once the property has been registered, the library may become eligible for various tax incentives and preservation grants.

An Indiana statute specifically designates financial incentives for historic public library preservation. The Indiana historic library building improvement matching grant program and its fund is designed for restoration and repair. Only Carnegie libraries and those listed on the National Register of Historic Places are eligible (Indiana Code Ann. §4-23-7.1-41, 2006). State administrative regulations should also be considered. The Indiana Library and Historical Board developed public library service standards and criteria for state and federal appropriation eligibility (590 Indiana Admin. Code 1, et seq., 2006).

The second method involves the technical details of physical rehabilitation. This process becomes more complex and expensive depending on the size of the project. The expertise of architects, librarians, historians, attorneys, and technicians may be consulted for efficiency, effectiveness, and adherence to applicable standards and regulations. Planning may be initiated by library staff to determine priorities such as need for expansion, function and use, structural integrity, or historical aesthetic quality (Frye, 1993; Scherer, 1990). For historic libraries suffering from years of neglect, efforts may include meeting modern building code standards or ADA requirements. For properties to become eligible for various preservation grants or tax incentives, renovation plans need to comply with related standards for treatment (Historic Preservation

Certifications, 2006). These standards ensure historical integrity during the process of rehabilitation. Numerous expansion and renovation projects have occurred in recent years. A new addition and renovation was successfully completed on the Culver-Union Township Public Library in 2002 (McPherson, 2003). The Kirklin Public Library doubled its original size with an expansion project in 2001-2002 (McPherson).

WHY PRESERVE?

The process of historic preservation is designed to revitalize living communities and sustain a collective memory of our past. Everyone can participate. Historic public libraries take on a particularly important role in the preservation of memory. They are identified with people or events from our past and continue to function as modern institutions of learning.

As historic libraries became too small to meet the demands of an increasing population, many began to serve other functions while preserving historic integrity. Adaptive re-use has become popular in recent years for commercial, private, and civic use. Tax incentives that may apply, including those for commercial and private properties, are an appealing alternative to new construction (IDNR Tax Incentives). A fine example is the Carnegie Library in Anderson which, after an extensive renovation, was re-opened in 1998 as a community fine arts center (McPherson, 2003).

Preserving Indiana public libraries sustains a legacy of public education and high standards of access to information. As an early leader of public library development, particularly during the Carnegie era, Indiana has a reputation to live up to. In Indiana, 29 public libraries are currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places (National Register Research, 2007) and three are listed on the Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory (Indiana Register, 2006). A recent inventory in 2003 lists 106 of the original 164 Carnegie libraries as current public libraries with 40 serving other functions and 18 having been lost to neglect and destruction (McPherson, 2003). The success of Indiana's future library preservation efforts relies on the leadership of modern enthusiasts.

V. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR PURSUING HISTORIC PRESERVATION EFFORTS

PRESERVATION GUIDES

National Park Service-Section on Preservation-
<http://www.cr.nps.gov/preservation.htm>
Provides information on grants and tax credits, federal laws and regulations, and related standards and guidelines.

Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology (SHPO)-
<http://www.in.gov/dnr/historic/>

Provides information on grants and aid, state laws and regulations, education programs and initiatives, and other related tools. The DHPA archives copies of all state and national historic register nominations at their office located at the Indiana Government Center.

National Register of Historic Places Publications-
<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/index.htm>
The National Park Service provides information on how to list a property on the National Register. The Bulletins and Brochures section includes information on how to complete property nominations and research historic properties. Guidelines for evaluating property types and examples of nomination forms are also included.

National Trust for Historic Preservation-
<http://www.nationaltrust.org/>
Provides information on funding, education, advocacy, and other resources for protecting communities.

DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines-
http://www.cr.nps.gov/local-law/arch_stnds_10.htm

Glossary of National Register Terms-
http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb16a/nrb16a_appendix_IV.htm

INDIANA STATE AND LOCAL AGENCIES

Statewide Directory of Preservation Commissions, Historical Societies, Main Street Programs, and related organizations-<http://www.in.gov/dnr/historic/directory.html>

CHECKLISTS

Rehabilitation Checklist, National Park Service
<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/cheklist.htm>
Also see National Register publications.

OTHER

Indiana County Interim Reports
Published by the Indiana Historic Landmarks Foundation, these surveys include brief summaries, photos, maps, and rankings of historically significant properties by county, throughout Indiana. Copies are located at most libraries and research centers throughout the state.

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