

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Bolivar Public Library

other names/site number Carnegie Library of Bolivar, Polk County Genealogical Society Library

## 2. Location

street & number 120 E. Jackson Street [N/A] not for publication

city or town Bolivar [N/A] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Polk code 167 zip code 65613

## 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  nationally  statewide  locally.

( See continuation sheet for additional comments  )

*Mark A Miles*

*06/02/03*

Signature of certifying official/Title

Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO

Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

( See continuation sheet for additional comments  )

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

entered in the National Register.  
See continuation sheet .

determined eligible for the National Register.  
See continuation sheet .

determined not eligible for the  
National Register.

removed from the National  
Register.

other, (explain:)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Bolivar Pubic Library  
Polk County, Missouri**

**5. Classification**

<b>Ownership of Property</b>	<b>Category of Property</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure
	<input type="checkbox"/> object

Number of Resources Within Property		
Contributing	Non-contributing	
1	0	building
0	0	sites
0	0	structur
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions

EDUCATION/ library  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions

EDUCATION/ library  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

Other: Carnegie Classical  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

foundation Concrete  
walls Brick  
Limestone  
roof \_\_\_\_\_  
other Terra cotta  
\_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet [ ]

Narrative Description See continuation sheet [x].

**Bolivar Pubic Library  
Polk County, Missouri**

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

**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**

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

Social History

**Period of Significance**

1915-1953

**Significant Dates**

1915  
1926

**Significant Person(s)**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Heckenlively, J. J., Architect

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

See continuation sheet [x].

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

**Bibliography** See continuation sheet [x].

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other:

Name of repository:

Polk County Genealogical Society Library

**Bolivar Public Library**  
**Polk County, Missouri**

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

**UTM References**

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	463799	4162786			
C. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing

[ ] See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Debbie Sheals  
 organization Private Contractor date March 25, 2003  
 street & number 406 West Broadway telephone 573-874-3779  
 city or town Columbia state Missouri zip code 65203

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**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.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional Items**

(Check with the SHPO or FOP for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

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

name Polk County Genealogical Society (President: Susan Sparks)  
 street & number 120 E. Jackson St. PO Box 632 telephone 417-777-2820  
 city or town Bolivar state MO zip code 65613

**United States Department of the Interior**

National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places****Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 1**Bolivar Public Library  
Polk County, Missouri**

**Summary:** The Bolivar Public Library is located at 120 East Jackson Street, in the town of Bolivar, in Polk County, Missouri. The building occupies a prominent corner lot on the public square, and is the only resource on the property. It faces north-northwest, to East Jackson Street and the county courthouse. It is a rectangular brick building with a flat roof and simple Classical Revival detailing. The building lot slopes steeply to the rear; the library is one and one half stories tall at the front, and two full stories at the rear. The three-bay facade is symmetrically arranged, with an elaborate center entranceway and large side window bays. The bays are divided by brick pilasters, and there are horizontal bands of terra cotta and limestone ornamentation at the cornice and the high water table. The upper basement walls are sheathed with the same type of dark bricks used on the main walls, and with smooth concrete closer to grade level. Wide stone steps which are flanked by heavy stone half-walls lead up to the front door. The doorway features an elaborate surround with simple classically derived ornamentation, and a wide transom window of leaded glass; the leaded glass is original. The entrance doors and the other windows in the building are all newer; the original openings are, however, unchanged. All original exterior ornamentation of note, including the terra cotta and tooled limestone ornamentation, is also intact. The entrance on the facade leads to the main reading room on the upper floor, and a second entrance on the side street provides access to the basement level. The interior plan of the library has seen very few changes over the years, and the original staircase and some early interior millwork also remain in place. The basement has recently been rehabilitated to house the collections of the Polk County Genealogical Society, and the second floor is currently vacant. Overall, the library is intact and in good condition, and it looks very much as it did when it opened to the public in 1915.

**Elaboration:** Bolivar is located approximately 35 miles north of Springfield, in southwest Missouri. It is the seat of Polk County, and the town's central business district surrounds the courthouse square. The courthouse is a massive stone building which was erected in 1906 and has seen few changes since. The streets surrounding the square contain commercial buildings of one and two stories, all set directly on the sidewalk. Construction dates for the buildings on the square range from the late 1800s to the later part of the twentieth century. Most are more than fifty years old; levels of integrity vary.

The library is located on the very southeastern corner of the square, at the intersection of Jackson Street and Springfield Avenue. It faces Jackson Street, which borders the southern edge of the square.<sup>1</sup> Springfield Avenue, which is now a busy thoroughfare, runs along the east side of the square, and leads south out of town, where it turns into State Highway 13. The library's front door faces Jackson Street, and the side basement entrance faces Springfield Avenue. The rear of the library lot, which contains a small parking lot, adjoins a narrow public alley.

Unlike most of the commercial buildings on the square, which tend to share side walls, the

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<sup>1</sup> The streets around the square are actually set at a slight angle, and the library faces north-northwest. (See enclosed topo map.)

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**Bolivar Public Library  
Polk County, Missouri**

library was designed to be a freestanding building. The side elevation faces a small empty lot, which appears to have always been vacant. The presence of windows and the general level of styling on the west wall of the library clearly indicates it was meant to be unattached.

The library is a fairly small building with a blocky rectangular form. It is sited with its narrow end facing the square, and its long east elevation close to Springfield Avenue. The main floor of the building sits high above street level, on a partially exposed basement. The slope of the lot allows the entire height of the basement to be above-grade at the back of the building. All of the exposed exterior walls are of smooth dark red brick, which is accented by light colored stone and terra cotta ornamentation. The facade and the very front bays of the side elevations are all ornamented in a similar manner, while the remaining wall surfaces are relatively plain. The walls of the basement level are set off from the upper floor by a wide limestone water table, and by rusticated brick piers which run between the windows of the lower level on the front and east side walls.

The northeast corner of the building, which faces the intersection of Jackson and Springfield, has a large cornerstone set into the brick wall. The side of the stone notes that it was set in October of 1914, and the front acknowledges the major donors for the construction project. That part reads:

THIS BUILDING IS THE  
GIFT OF ANDREW CARNEGIE  
AND THE LOT THE GIFT OF  
T. H. B. DUNNEGAN.

The design and placement of the building on its lot create a very formal facade and entranceway. Instead of adjoining the sidewalk and having a street level entrance, as is the case for the surrounding commercial buildings, the library is set back slightly from the street, and is fronted by a large, steep flight of steps. The wide steps which are on the building today are early, but not original. They replaced the original brick and concrete stairs in 1926, and are of roughly the same size and configuration as the originals.<sup>2</sup> The stairs lead up to the wide front doorway, which occupies the accentuated center bay of the facade.

The dominant central bay protrudes slightly from the plane of the wall. It is delineated by wide brick pilasters which run from the water table to a wide entablature located along the upper part of the wall. The pilasters have simple molded capitals which are ornamented by flat squared pendants. The side bays feature large windows and have the same type of pilasters, the only difference being that the pilasters at the outside edges of the facade have larger pendants. Those pendants have rounded bottom edges and extend up above the first band of molding to form simple low-relief brackets.

The entablature runs along the entire facade, and wraps around the first bays of both side walls as well. (See photos 1-3.) The cornice is of limestone, and the lower sections of the entablature are of glazed terra cotta. The words PUBLIC LIBRARY, in dark lettering, fill the frieze of

<sup>2</sup> "New Steps for the Library Building," Bolivar Free Press, April 22, 1926.

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Bolivar Public Library  
Polk County, Missouri

the entablature over the doorway.

A low brick parapet wall above the entablature continues the line of the entrance bay; it also protrudes slightly and has brick piers which line up with the pilasters below. That section of the parapet is also very slightly peaked, and ornamented with light colored inset panels of stone or terra cotta. All of the front sections of the parapet have light-colored coping which appears to be of terra cotta.

The front door surround, which is of wood, has the same type of classically derived ornamentation found on the masonry units of the facade. It has a simple peaked top, and paneled side pilasters. The pilasters are topped with flat brackets which echo the lines of the corner brackets on the main wall of the building. The transom window above the doorway is filled with leaded glass set into a geometrical grid. Early images of the building show that the leaded glass is original, and that the transoms above the front windows once held matching glass panels; single-light units fill those spaces today. The exterior doors on the building today, as well as all windows except the front transom, are only a few years old. The original openings and general patterns of fenestration are, however, unchanged. All of the windows on the main floor have smooth limestone sills, and the front windows are further accented by simple flat brackets beneath the sills.

The east elevation, which faces Springfield Avenue, is slightly more elaborate than are the south and west walls. (See photos 6 and 7.) In addition to the entablature and general ornamentation of its front bay, that wall also has a small top cornice and a narrow water table which continue the lines of the facade embellishments. The limestone cornice sits above a corbeled brick band, and rusticated piers are located beneath the line of the water table. There is also a course of soldier bricks along the top edges of the windows. The west and south walls of the building, by contrast, have little added ornament. The only embellishment of note consists of limestone sills, and a soldier course in the brickwork along the tops of the upper floor windows.

The interior spaces of the building are largely intact, and continue in almost the same use for which they were constructed. The public library vacated the building in 2000, and it is now home to the Polk County Genealogical Society. The Society has rehabilitated the lower level, which now houses its collections, and plans to do the same for the upper level in the near future. The upper floor of the library houses the main reading room and original library space, while the lower level contains a large lecture room (now the Society's reading room), along with bathrooms, a mechanical room and small offices.

The front doorway opens to a small vestibule on the upper level which contains a staircase to the lower level and a wide doorway into the main space. (See photo 8.) With the exception of small alcoves on either side of the vestibule, the rest of the upper floor consists of an open reading room. (See photo 9.) The room has plaster walls, and a high ceiling covered by a suspended grid. The window openings are in place, although the surrounding trim is gone. The woodwork around the front vestibule and alcoves remains, as does the narrow original staircase. All of the woodwork is painted, and has been since the library was remodeled in 1951.

The lower level is reached via the stairs in the entranceway, and the street level door on Springfield Avenue. The Springfield Avenue door now serves as the main entrance for the building.

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**Bolivar Public Library  
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The door opens to the original lecture room. (See photo 11.) The back part of the lower level contains new bathrooms and the original small mechanical room. The front holds smaller offices, which roughly correspond with the alcoves of the upper level. Some early woodwork remains in place there, including door trim, and several original paneled doors. (See photo 12.) The lower level has been fully rehabilitated and is in excellent condition, and both levels of the building appear much as they did during the period of significance.

Overall, the Bolivar Public Library has seen few changes since it became the first free library in the community in 1915. The exterior appears today very much as it always has; all of the original exterior ornamentation of note survives. The original reading rooms and other interior spaces are also largely intact. As the new home of the Polk County Genealogical Society, the building still serves much as it was built to do, and it strongly evokes its period of significance. ◻

**Figure One. Historic Photo taken between 1926 and 1950.**

From the collections of the Polk County Genealogical Society.



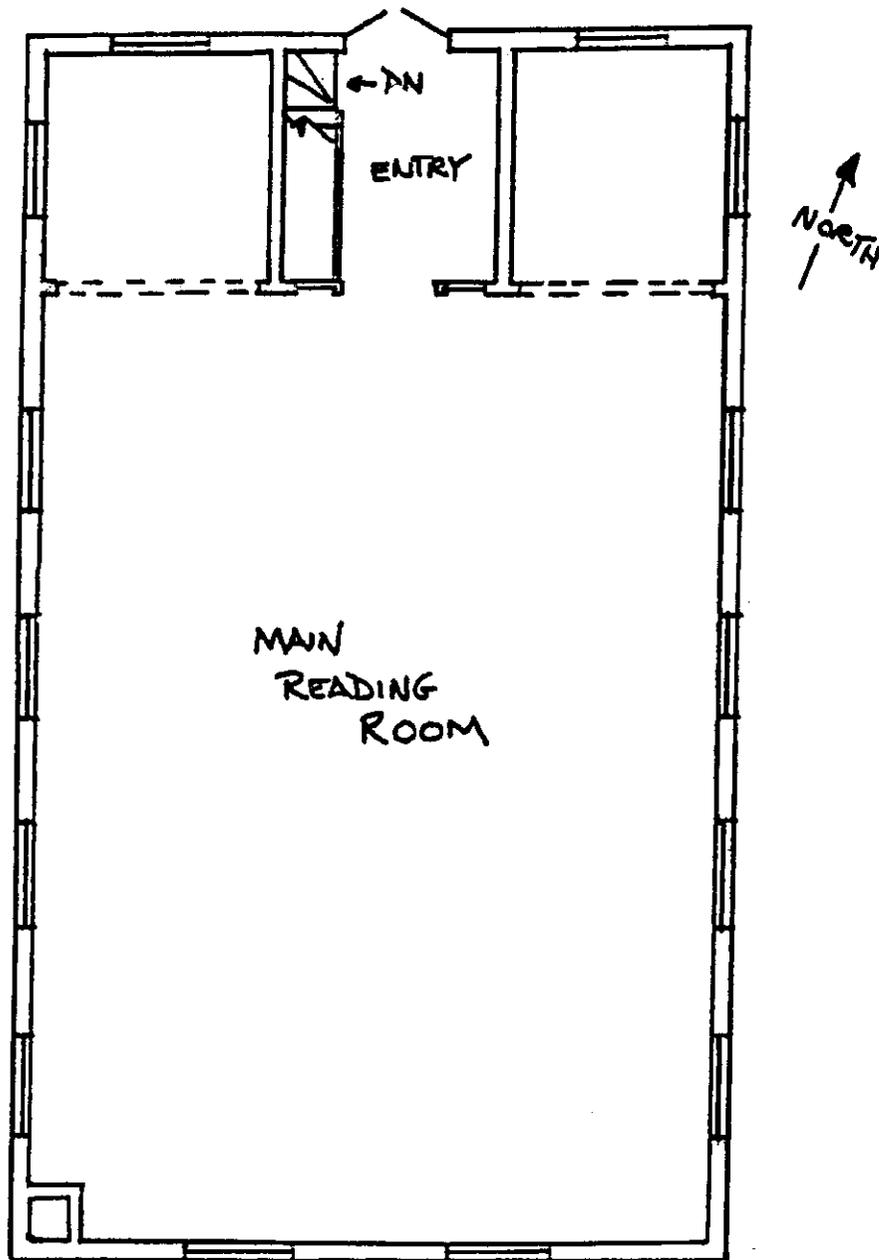
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**Bolivar Public Library**  
**Polk County, Missouri**

Figure Two. Upper Level Plan. Drawn by Deb Sheals, from plans on file with the Polk County Genealogical Society. Not to scale.

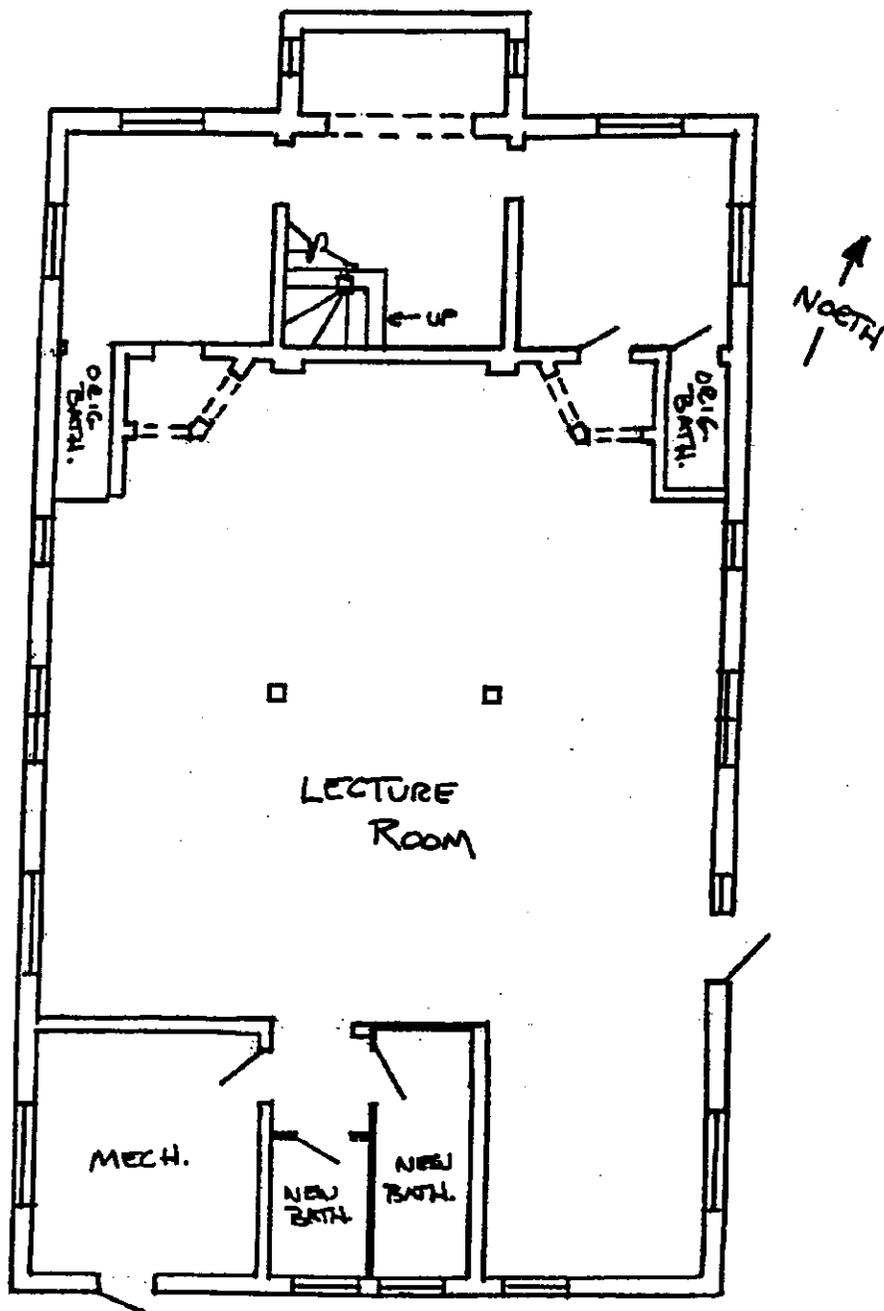


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Figure Three. Lower Level Plan. Drawn by Deb Sheals, from plans on file with the Polk County Genealogical Society. Not to scale.



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**Bolivar Public Library  
Polk County, Missouri**

**Summary:** The Bolivar Public Library, at 120 East Jackson St., in Bolivar, Polk County, Missouri, is locally significant under Criterion A, in the area of Social History. The building was erected in 1915 to house the community's first public library, and it served in that capacity until 2000. The period of significance thus runs from 1915 to 1953, the arbitrary fifty year cut-off. The building continues to function as a library; it is now the home of the Polk County Genealogical Society. The library was constructed at a time of great growth in the number of free public libraries in the United States, and was one of thousands of such buildings financed by Andrew Carnegie and the Carnegie Corporation. The Bolivar Library was funded by an \$8,000 Carnegie grant to the Bolivar Library Board. The Library Board was headed by T. H. B. Dunnegan, a prominent local businessman who also donated the land upon which the building sits. This is the only Carnegie library in Polk County, and one of only 22 in the state which still function as libraries. The building was designed by Springfield architect James Heckenlively, who was also involved with the construction of a Carnegie branch in Springfield. The brick building has limestone and terra cotta ornamentation with simplified classical revival motifs. Almost all exterior architectural detailing of note is intact, and the Bolivar Public Library today looks very much as it did during the period of significance. It is a highly intact reminder of the profound impact the Carnegie Library program had upon Missouri and the rest of the country.

**Elaboration:** This was the first free public library in Bolivar, which is the seat of Polk County, in southwestern Missouri. Settlement in the area began in the early 1830s, and when Polk County was established in 1834, Bolivar was created to serve as the county seat. The town gained stability in the last half of that century when Southwest Baptist College moved to town in 1879, and through the establishment of train service in 1884. One local history noted that those two events "helped Bolivar develop into more than just a rural county seat town and inland trade center."<sup>3</sup>

Bolivar developed steadily over the years, and by the time the library was completed, the town could boast of a population of nearly 2,000. The area around the courthouse naturally developed into the business center for the community, a function it serves yet today. The present courthouse was built in 1906, of Indiana limestone. That massive building, which is three full stories tall with a central clock tower, is visible from many parts of town, and it continues to be a dominant presence on the town square. The \$50,000 courthouse construction project was overseen by a group of local citizens headed by T. H. B. Dunnegan, a long-time resident and civic leader. Dunnegan was a Civil War veteran who settled in Bolivar not long after the war, after which he helped found one of the town's first newspapers, the Republican Free Press. Soon after, he became president of the Polk County Bank, a position he held for many decades.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> George Francis Hooper and James C. Sterling, Sesquicentennial Photograph Album: 1835-1985, Polk County Classics. (Bolivar: Bolivar Herald-Free Press, 1985) p. 61.

<sup>4</sup> Hooper and Sterling, pp. 13, 287.

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**Polk County, Missouri**

The courthouse project was one of several civic improvement projects in which Dunnegan played a role. He served for fifty years on the Bolivar board of education, during which time he was involved with supervising the construction of two new public schools. That experience, combined with his long prominent role in area business, served him well on the courthouse project. It also made him an ideal candidate to head the Bolivar Free Public Library Board, which was established in the early 1910s to pursue the creation of a free public library for the community.

The library board of trustees consisted of nine men appointed by the Bolivar City Council. The members were Dunnegan, J. J. Akard, F. M. Soffner, W. S. White, R. B. Viles, J. M. Leavitt, C. H. Skinker, T. Y. Rechov, and W. U. Townsend.<sup>5</sup> Townsend, who owned an abstract company and 'Farm Loan' business located on the public square, was apparently the secretary for the board. Early records of correspondence between the board and the Carnegie Corporation show that he was the local contact throughout the project.<sup>6</sup> Those records, along with selected newspaper clippings on file with the Polk County Genealogical Society, show that the library board worked for about 18 months to get the library built and furnished. The project was also strongly supported by the Bolivar Commercial Club, a civic improvement club which was organized locally in 1913.<sup>7</sup>

The support of local civic leaders for the creation of a public library in Bolivar followed national trends. The concept of free public libraries had developed in the last half of the nineteenth century, and by the time the Bolivar board was formed, libraries had come to be seen as necessary civic amenities for all up-and-coming communities.

The earliest libraries in the country, which some referred to as "social libraries," were private institutions which charged a fee or required a membership for use of the books in their collections. That type of library could be found in the eastern parts of the country in the late 1700s and early 1800s.<sup>8</sup> By the mid-1800s, the concept of tax-funded public libraries which were free to all had taken root. The first step in that process began with the creation of "School District Libraries," in which the states required individual school districts to maintain libraries for the use of the general public. Although that plan proved to be less than effective, due to the small units of organization and taxation, it did serve to establish the concept of publicly supported libraries.

A decade or so after the first School Library Law was passed in New York, states began passing more broadly defined library laws, which enabled communities to levy general taxes for the

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<sup>5</sup> "Carnegie Library Site a Gift to the City," Bolivar Free Press, Nov. 20, 1913, and Polk County Recorder, Deed Records, Book 130, p. 407. (Polk County Courthouse, Bolivar, MO) p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Cook, Keith A. "Carnegie Library," Transcription of correspondence relating to the Carnegie Library Grant for the city of Bolivar, Nov. 1913-Jan. 26, 1915.

<sup>7</sup> "Carnegie Library Site a Gift to the City," p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> George S. Bobinski, Carnegie Libraries: Their History and Impact on American Public Library Development, (Chicago: American Library Association, 1969) p. 4.

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Bolivar Public Library  
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creation and maintenance of free public libraries. Although the first publicly supported free public library in the country was established in Peterborough, New York, in 1833, it was not until statewide public library laws come into existence that the practice became widespread. The first statewide public library law was passed in Massachusetts in 1848. In Missouri, legislation creating school district libraries passed in 1853, and a state public library law was enacted in 1885.<sup>9</sup> The first Missouri Library Commission was established in 1907.<sup>10</sup> Nationally, more than half of the states in the nation had public library laws in place by 1896, and the number of free public libraries had grown from 188 in 1875 to over 1,000.

Although the public library system had been firmly established by the end of the nineteenth century, it was, as one history described it, still a "young and struggling, institution."<sup>11</sup> In that early phase of development, many public libraries came into existence only through the efforts of local philanthropists and civic organizations. One history of the movement noted that public library funding became "one of the most popular forms of memorial bequest at the turn of the century."<sup>12</sup> It was during that period that millionaire Andrew Carnegie was forming his personal philosophy of philanthropy, one which would soon lead him to finance the construction of almost 1,700 public library buildings in the United States, 33 of which were built in Missouri.

Andrew Carnegie funded his first public library in the United States in the late 1880s, and by 1893, had established what he called a "wholesale" period of library funding. Carnegie's library funding program, which lasted until 1919, has been described as "the most influential philanthropic program in American history."<sup>13</sup> By 1919, Carnegie grants had made possible fully half of the public libraries then operating in the United States, and he had given away more than \$56,000,000 for library construction projects alone.<sup>14</sup>

Impressive as that number is, it accounts for only a modest percentage of Carnegie's philanthropic ventures. All told, he donated more than \$300,000,000, fully ninety percent of his total fortune, to fund projects he believed would be for the betterment of mankind. That generosity was made possible by a classic rags-to-riches story, combined with a deep-seated belief that with wealth, came a responsibility to do good works.

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<sup>9</sup> Bobinski, pp. 5-6.

<sup>10</sup> Wilson Bell, Official Manual State of Missouri 1945-1946, (Jefferson City: Mid-State Publishing Co., 1945) p. 991.

<sup>11</sup> Bobinski, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Theodore Jones, Carnegie Libraries Across America: A Public Legacy, (New York: Preservation Press, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1997) p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> Jones, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Bobinski, p. 3.

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**Bolivar Public Library**  
**Polk County, Missouri**

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Carnegie was a Scottish immigrant who moved to the United States with his family at the age of thirteen. His first job was in a textile factory, with a salary of just over a dollar a week; by the time he retired fifty years later, his annual income was estimated to be \$24,700,000. His early business ventures included work for the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, investment in the Woodruff Sleeping car company, oil field ventures, bridge companies, iron and steel. His last 36 years in business were at the helm of the Carnegie Steel Company, which he sold to J. P. Morgan in 1901 for \$500,000,000. As one historical account noted, that sale made more time for his other 'career', that of professional philanthropist: "at the age of sixty-six, healthy, alert and keenly interested in politics and literature, Carnegie retired and devoted the rest of his life to philanthropy and the securement of international peace."<sup>15</sup>

Carnegie took the task of distributing his wealth very seriously, and in 1889 took his sentiment to the public in a pair of essays published in the North American Review.<sup>16</sup> In the first, titled "Wealth", he espoused the virtues of helping those who would help themselves, rather than simply handing out money indiscriminately. In the second essay, titled "The Best Fields of Philanthropy," he listed seven fields for philanthropists to concentrate upon. In his order they were: universities, libraries, medical centers, public parks, meeting and concert halls, public baths, and churches.

His affection for libraries came from a number of sources, including actions of his father, and his own early experience with a lending library. While working as a weaver in Scotland, his father convinced fellow weavers to pitch in for the purchase of books, and then to have one of the workers read to the others as they worked. Later, when Carnegie was a boy in the United States, he was allowed access to the J. Anderson Library of Allegheny City, established by Col. Anderson for the use of mechanics and workingmen. Carnegie wrote that his experience with Anderson led him to resolve that "if ever wealth came to me...other poor boys might receive opportunities similar to those for which we are indebted to that noble man."<sup>17</sup> From those sentiments came the Carnegie Library program, through which Carnegie supplied money for new library buildings, but only if the host communities pledged to fill them with books and to provide ongoing financial support.

As word of Carnegie's willingness to supply building funds spread, he was flooded with requests; one source noted that Carnegie received some 500 to 3,000 letters per day.<sup>18</sup> Day-to-day administration of the library program was handled by Carnegie's personal secretary, James Bertram,

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<sup>15</sup> Bobinski, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Carnegie, "Wealth," North American Review, 148: 653-54 (June 1889), and Andrew Carnegie, "The Best Fields of Philanthropy," North American Review, 149: 688-89 (Dec. 1889).

<sup>17</sup> Carnegie, "Best Fields For Philanthropy," p. 689.

<sup>18</sup> Jones, p. 25.

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from 1898 to 1919. It was Bertram's job to ensure that applicants met the standards laid out by Carnegie. To be eligible for a Carnegie grant, a community had to: demonstrate a need for a public library, provide a lot upon which to build the facility, and promise to provide ongoing support and maintenance with tax funds equal to ten percent of the building cost. Carnegie funds were to be used only for the actual library building; books and furnishings also had to be supplied by the community.

Records of Bertram's correspondence with the various grant applicants and recipients show that he was a very meticulous man who was sometimes a bit lacking in diplomacy.<sup>19</sup> Examples of his impatience with what he saw as foolish questions abound, and show that, as one study put it, "tact was of no concern to Bertram."<sup>20</sup> His answer to a letter from the president of the library board in Whiting, Indiana about just whom should erect their proposed building drew this response:

There is no reason why you should not understand the letter sent, as it is very plain. Mr. Carnegie said he would give the money for the building. If he had intended you to understand he would erect the building himself, he would have said so.<sup>21</sup>

Lack of tact notwithstanding, Bertram was an efficient administrator, and his strict rules helped many inexperienced library boards set up library systems that, like the one in Bolivar, would function well for decades to come. As Theodore Jones noted, "in spite of his behavior, Bertram shepherded 1,689 libraries to completion."<sup>22</sup>

Bertram not only handled the financial end of the grant agreements, he was also involved with guiding the design process, especially in later years of the program. Early in the program, Carnegie required little input on actual plans, a practice which sometimes resulted in library buildings that were heavy on ornament and pretension, and light on useable space. As Carnegie himself wrote of a library in Denver in 1902; "I am sorry to have my money wasted in this way--This is no practical library plan. Too many pillars."<sup>23</sup>

Such excesses eventually led Carnegie and Bertram to impose controls upon the design of the buildings Carnegie funded. After 1908, Bertram required that towns submit plans for review. He went a step further in 1911, and put together a leaflet on library design, based upon consultations

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<sup>19</sup> Most of the letters associated with the library grant program are now on microfilm in various locations. Both Bobinski and Jones cite them in their histories of the program.

<sup>20</sup> Jones, p. 37.

<sup>21</sup> Letter quoted in Bobinski, p. 49.

<sup>22</sup> Jones, p. 37.

<sup>23</sup> Carnegie, quoted in Bobinski, p. 57.

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with leading librarians and architects which had established general standards for library design. That leaflet, which was titled "Notes on Library Buildings," also reflected his personal experience with the design of hundreds of libraries. The leaflet included suggestions on minimum standard features, as well as several sets of suggested floorplans. All of the plans shown in the "Notes" were two stories tall, with main reading room and librarian space on the upper floor, and a lecture room and support spaces on the lower level.

In general, Bertram was more concerned with the how the form of the building could best serve the needs of the public. He paid less attention to such things as architectural style and exterior ornamentation, as long as the design was not overly extravagant. As Ted Jones noted, "Carnegie and Bertram simply wanted useable library buildings and left the choice of style to citizens of grant communities."<sup>24</sup> As a result of that practice, Carnegie libraries built after Bertram began including "Notes" with his grant award notifications may vary somewhat in style, but often share a common form, with a simple rectangular plan, a raised basement, and steep front steps. (Those steps are often the bane of modern librarians struggling to provide accessibility.)

Bertram's characteristic lack of tact extended to his comments on proposed design as well. George Bobinski wrote that a "typical and frequent phrase of his after receiving some proposed plans was, 'but these will not do.'"<sup>25</sup> Correspondence files relating to the Bolivar library show that this project was typical in that regard.

Although the Board of Trustees worked with an architect on the project, almost all correspondence with the Carnegie offices were limited to Bertram and board member W. U. Townsend. Bertram did not like to muddy the waters with multiple local contacts; as he informed Townsend, "the architect is responsible to you, not to us."<sup>26</sup> Many letters and sets of drawings were exchanged between Mr. Townsend Mr. Bertram during the design process. Bertram's letters to Townsend show his well-documented acerbity. His first reply to the proposed design simply said "Kindly refer to our letter of promise...and the notes on the library building accompanying same, and send plans more in conformance with what is recommended in the notes."<sup>27</sup> That letter was followed by several rather terse exchanges, in which Townsend attempted to defend local design decisions, many of which Bertram rejected outright.

Townsend's replies were unfailingly polite, although he did defend the qualifications of his building committee. He wrote in early February of 1914, "Your notes suggest that the library board in a small town usually consists of busy men who have not had the time to obtain knowledge of the

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<sup>24</sup> Jones, p. 54.

<sup>25</sup> Bobinski, p. 63.

<sup>26</sup> Letter from Bertram to Townsend, March 17, 1914.

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Bertram to Townsend, Feb. 24, 1914.



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Most of the conflict over the plans appears to have been based upon the need to place the entrance to the Bolivar library in the narrow end of the building. In a letter dated March of 1914, Bertram even used his favorite term of rejection; "with regard to the plans, they will not do." That same letter, however, offered a solution; "It so happens we have just put thru the press a revised and amplified copy of our "Notes on Library Building"...in these notes you will find the problem of a narrow end entrance solved in the most sensible and advantageous manner."<sup>29</sup>

The plan shown in the new leaflet must have addressed the issue to everyone's satisfaction, as the plan of the library as built is very much like the sample "Plan C" in Bertram's notes, which is the only one of six to show an end entrance. (See Figure Four.) Subsequent exchanges between Bertram and Townsend discuss only minor alterations to the proposed form of the building, and in May of 1914, Bertram approved disbursement of the promised grant money.

Although Bertram had much influence upon the form and layout of the building, the design of the exterior was apparently left to the project architect, James Heckenlively of Springfield. The Bolivar library was actually Heckenlively's second experience with a Carnegie project; he was a consulting architect for the first public library building in Springfield, which was built with Carnegie funds in 1903. Other buildings in the region which have been credited to Heckenlively include the several area Springfield area schools, as well as Central High School, St. John's Hospital and the Shrine Mosque, all of which are in Springfield.<sup>30</sup>

Heckenlively's handling of the ornamentation for the Bolivar library utilizes very simplified Classical Revival motifs, which were quite popular with designers of Carnegie libraries. One analysis of the program estimated that some 70 percent of the Carnegie libraries used at least some classically inspired ornamentation.<sup>31</sup> Those which were built before Carnegie began requiring design review were generally much more elaborate than those built later. Stylistic embellishments were toned down as the years passed, especially after Carnegie and Bertram began expressing their displeasure with overly ornate designs. One historical account noted that in the long run, architects had the most impact by developing a style specifically for small libraries, influenced not by what Bertram and Carnegie sought to leave out, such as domes, but by starting with a basic floorplan and structure and then adding the minimum number of classical details needed to satisfy starry-eyed building committees. This became the Carnegie Classical.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Letter from Bertram to Townsend, March 24, 1914.

<sup>30</sup> Allen Casey, "Central High School Facility Study," (Casey and Associates: Springfield, May 1996), appendix.

<sup>31</sup> Jones, p. 61. Jones groups several related subcategories into a general "Beaux-Arts" heading.

<sup>32</sup> Jones. P. 69.

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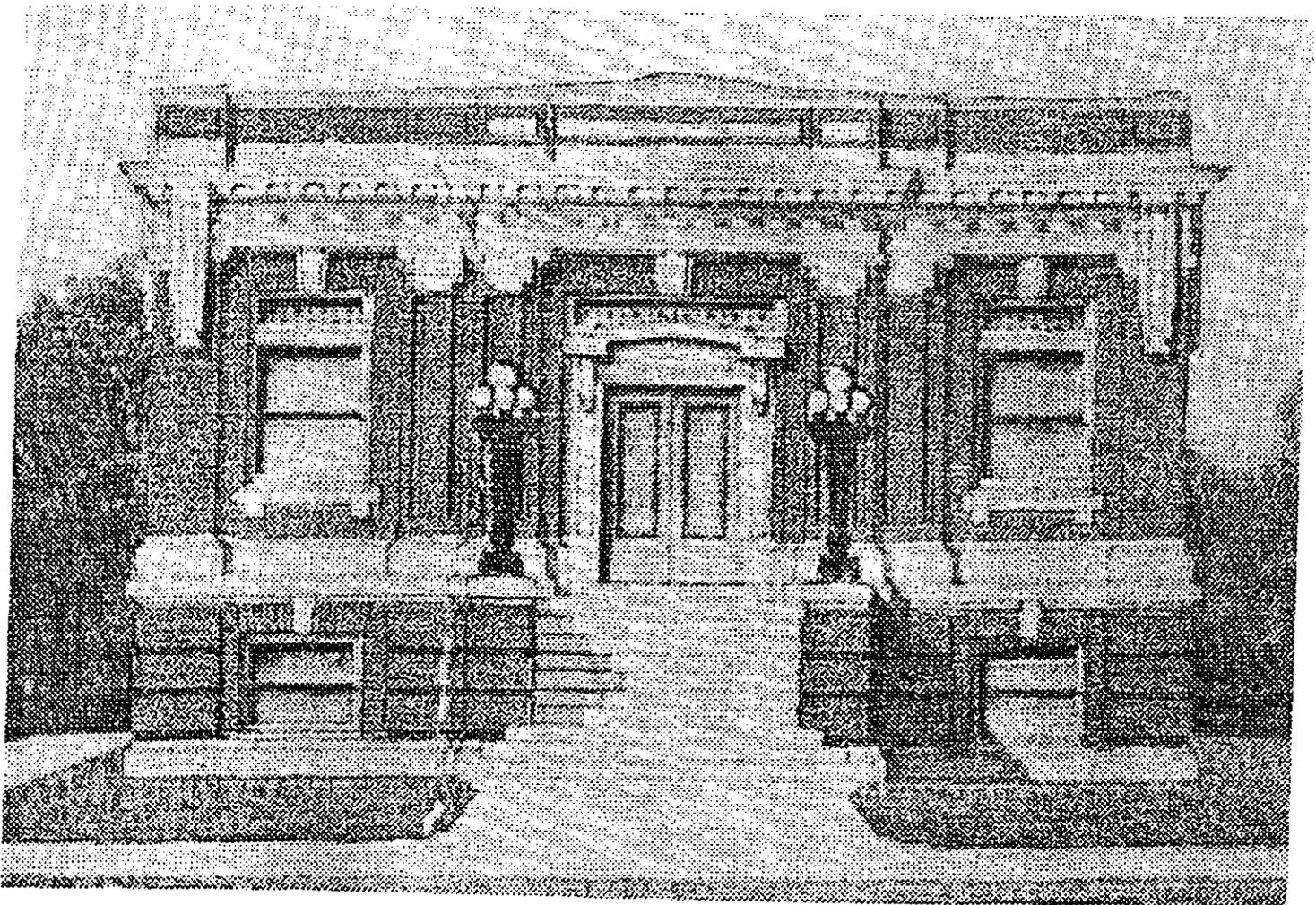
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In the design of the Bolivar library, common Classical Revival features of a front pediment and columns have been distilled down to a bare *minimum of brick pilasters and a simple peak on the central bay of the front parapet*. That simplicity reflects both the modest budget for the project, and Carnegie's disapproval of architectural extravagances. It also fits Jones' definition of 'Carnegie Classical.'

**Figure Five: Early Drawing of the Library. Probably done by project architect James Heckenlively. Sesquicentennial Photograph Album: 1835-1985, Polk County Classics, (Bolivar: Bolivar Herald-Free Press, 1985) p. 98.**



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Once design issues were worked out between Bertram and the building committee, construction proceeded quickly. Bertram approved the first disbursement of funds in May of 1914, and the Library opened for business the following March. The library was an immediate hit; in the first five days of operation, over 430 readers cards were issued (in a city of less than 2,000 people), and 400 books were checked out. The books for the new library were acquired through public donations of books and money. The book committee of the library board, which consisted of Townsend, C. H. Skinner, and W. S. White, took responsibility for filling the new library. They published an appeal for support in the local paper shortly before the building was completed, which noted that their goal for opening day was to have 1,000 volumes available.<sup>33</sup>

The library soon became a standard fixture in the community, and it served the citizens of Bolivar in its original capacity for more than eight decades. In the spring of 1951, the Bolivar Library Board voted to become part of the Polk County Library, and the Carnegie building became the headquarters for the Southwest Regional Library, which served Cedar, Polk, and Dallas Counties. Later that year, the Regional Library Board completed major remodeling of the main floor, which involved painting all of the dark-stained woodwork white, repainting the walls and ceiling, and installing new flooring. A portrait of Simon Bolivar was cleaned by the Nelson Gallery of Art and rehung in the reading room. No major exterior changes were made then or at other times, and the library today still looks like it did in the 1930s.

Early in the year 2000, the Bolivar Public Library moved out of its long-time home and into a newly constructed library facility. Not long after, the building was purchased by the Polk County Genealogical Society to serve as their headquarters. Under their stewardship, the lower level has been fully rehabilitated and put back into use. Plans are being developed for the upper floor, which will benefit from the same type of attention. With its new use, the building functions much as it did during the period of significance; the ongoing rehabilitation efforts will ensure that it continues to do so for decades to come.

The Bolivar Public Library came into existence with the help of Andrew Carnegie, and stayed in use with the support of the citizens of Bolivar. It survives today as a fine representative example of a Carnegie Library in Missouri, in both form, and long-time patterns of use. △

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<sup>33</sup> "An Appeal to the Citizens of Bolivar," (undated or cited newspaper clipping in the collection of the Polk County Genealogical Society.)

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**Brief Chronology**

1913. August 4, Bolivar applies for a Carnegie Library Grant. In November, Bertram replies that the grant can be awarded with local support.

1914. April. Judge T. H. B. Dunnegan and his wife Ella C. donate land on the courthouse square "for the purpose of a public library site." Dunnegan was president of the library board.

1915. March 13, Library opens to the public.

1917 Carnegie Corporation trustees vote to terminate library grant program due to wartime demands for resources elsewhere. The program was not reinstated after the war ended.

1926. Original front stairs and brick buttresses were replaced with a larger structure of Phoenix Stone.

1951. May. Bolivar Library Board votes to become part of the Polk County Library, and is designated headquarters for the Southwest Regional Library. October. Regional Library Board completes major remodeling project of the main floor.

1952. Neon sign added to corner of Library for identification.

1986. Ceiling of main floor lowered.

1988. Ceiling of basement level lowered.

1989. Study of Carnegie Libraries in Southwest Missouri notes that the library was still in use, but the neon sign was gone.

2000. Public Library operations move out of this building, into a new facility built for that purpose.

2001. Polk County Genealogical Society moves into the building. △

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The East 42 feet of Lot 1 of Block 18, original plat of the City of Bolivar, Polk County, MO

**Boundary Justification**

The current boundaries encompass all of the land associated with the library, historically and currently.

**Photographs**

The following information is the same for all photographs:

Bolivar Public Library  
120 E. Jackson Street, Bolivar  
Polk County, Missouri  
Debbie Sheals  
March, 2003

Negatives on file with Debbie Sheals 406 West Broadway, Columbia, MO 65205

**List of Photographs**

See photo key for description of camera angles.

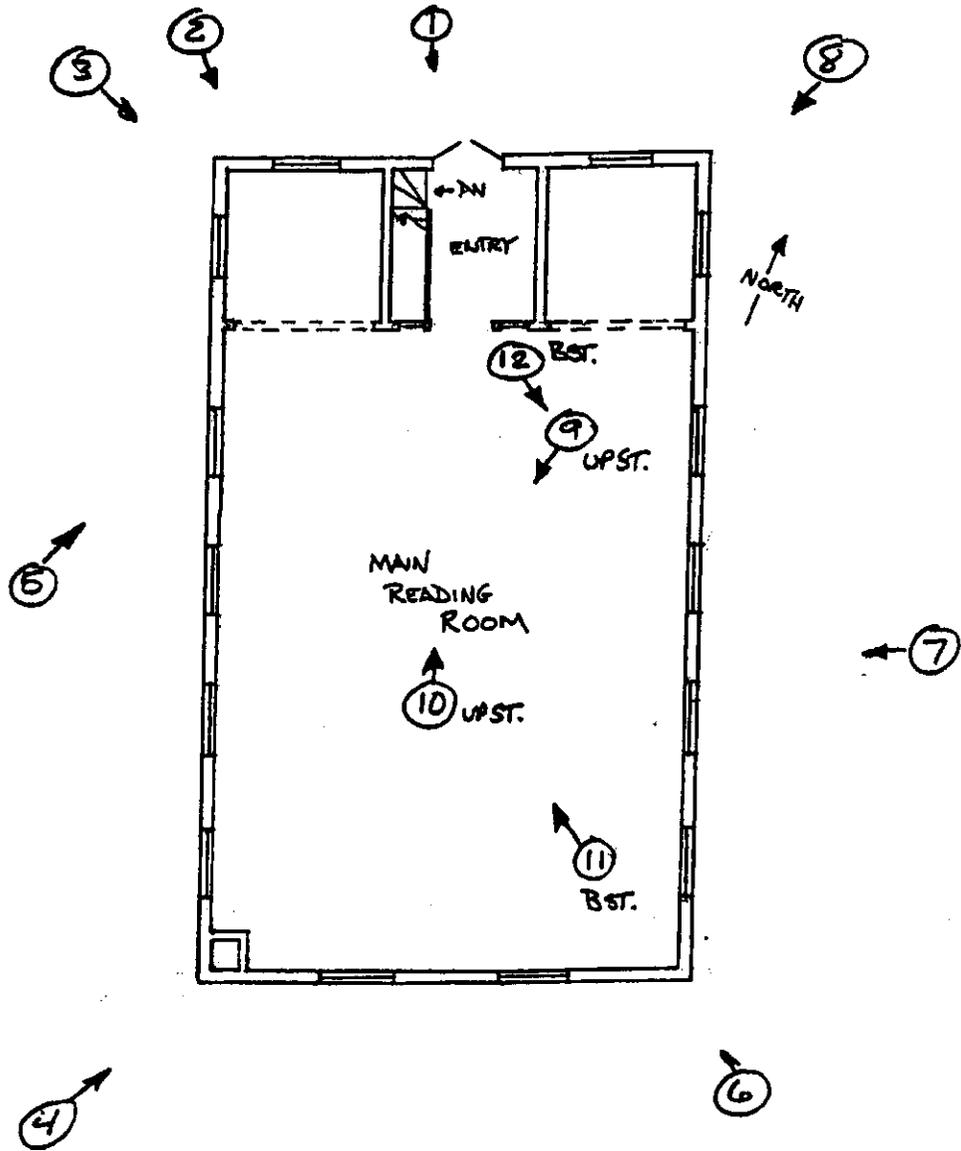
1. Facade, from Jackson Street.
2. Northwest (front) corner.
3. Northwest corner, with stairs.
4. Southwest (back) corner.
5. Detail, west (side) wall.
6. Southeast corner, with courthouse in background.
7. East elevation, along Springfield Ave.
8. Northeast corner.
9. Upper floor, back of reading room.
10. Front doors and entryway.
11. Lower level, main room, looking to front of building.
12. Lower level, doors in office space.

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Photo Key.

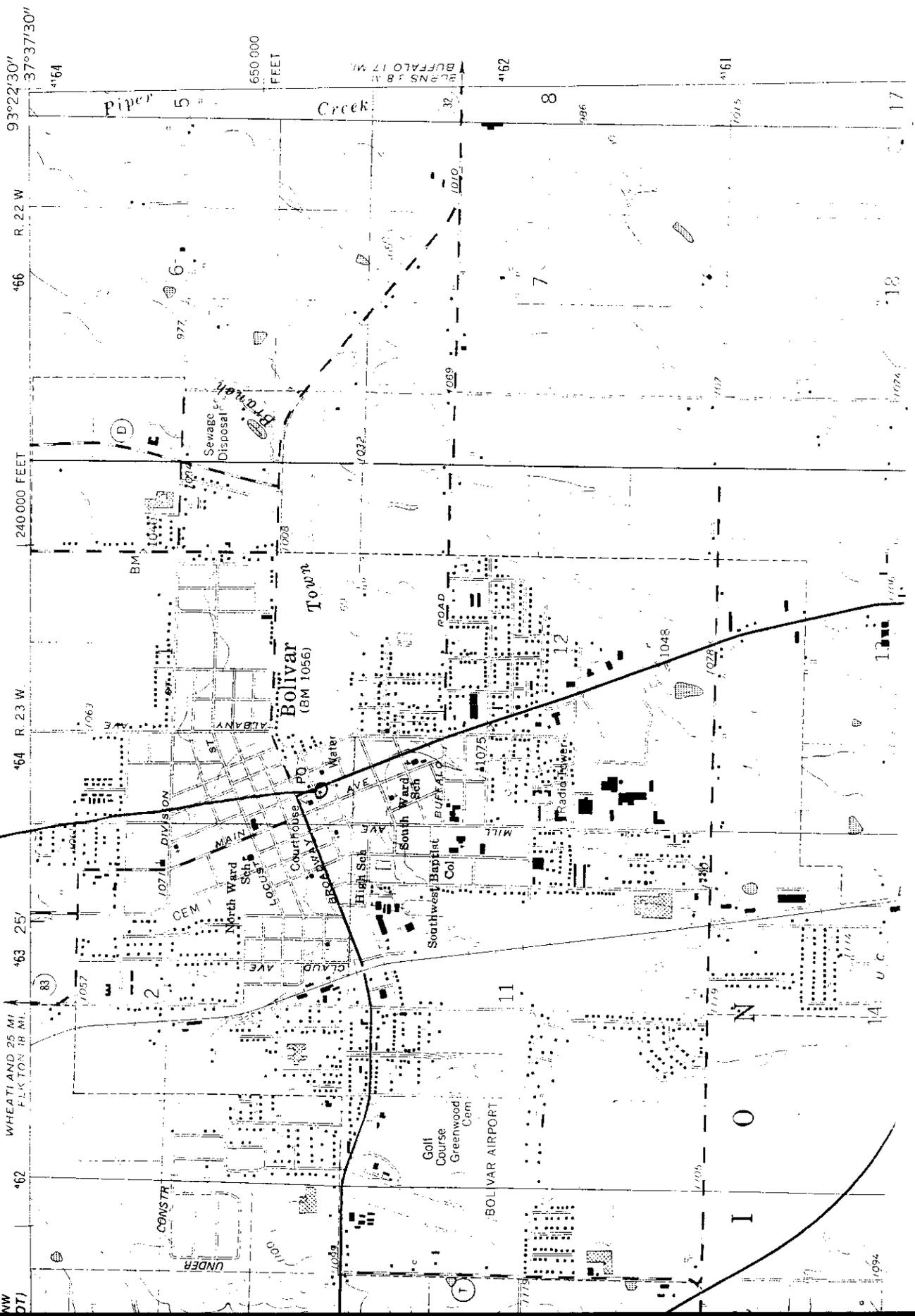


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