

PAXTON CARNEGIE LIBRARY  
254 South Market Street  
Paxton  
Ford County  
Illinois

HABS IL-329  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS  
FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### PAXTON CARNEGIE LIBRARY

HABS No. IL-329

Location: 254 S. Market St, Paxton, IL 60957

Mercator Coordinates: 16.406867.4479260

Present Owner/

Occupant: Mayor James E. Kingston/Paxton Carnegie Library

Present Use: Education/Library

The Paxton Carnegie Library primarily serves the citizens of the City of Paxton as their main public library. Small community events such as children's story time, lectures, and small classes are also periodically offered to members of the city.

Significance:

The Paxton Carnegie Library is locally significant under Criterion A and C. It is significant for educational purposes in its role in providing library services to the citizens of Paxton. The building is also significant as a local architectural example of the Classic Revival/Beaus Arts style. In addition, it is an example of a "Carnegie Library", meeting the criteria of the Carnegie Library property type. The period of significance for the building is 1904, when it was built.

#### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

##### A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: 1904.
2. Architect: Paul O. Moratz

James Betram, Andrew Carnegie's confidential secretary from 1897 to 1914, handled the office, which dealt with requests for grants to provide libraries. He was the person handled most of the correspondence and made it a priority to insure that the libraries were planned well and would not exceed their budget. While he did not interfere with the choice of the architect, he insisted towns choose architects with experience in library design. Paul O. Moratz was chosen as the architect for such experience.

Paul O. Moratz was a German immigrant who learned the building trade from his father in Bloomington. He entered the University of Illinois in 1888 and studied under Nathan C. Ricker, supplementing his income by doing carpentry for local merchants. He received his architecture license from the State of Illinois in 1897. His earliest work was in Bloomington, Illinois where he was owner of the lumber mill his father had founded. He designed nineteen of the one hundred and five Carnegie libraries in Illinois as well as one in Michigan, one in Kansas, and one in Tennessee. The Paxton library is seen as one of his most interesting designs. The Carnegie Library in Sycamore, Illinois was modeled after it. Moratz's mill was destroyed by fire in the 1930s, and with it went his office, which contained all of his records and blueprints. After the fire he shifted focus from millwork to flooring. He ended his architecture practice and became successful as flooring specialist, holding several patents on wood floor construction.

3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants and uses: The Paxton Carnegie Public Library, 1904 to present. The original use as a library remains today.
  4. Builder, contractor, suppliers:  
Contractor: N.H. Pearson  
Brick Work and Masonry: H. &C. Turner  
Plumbing: Kemp Bros. & Hopkins  
Electric Work: Jonathon Schwimmer  
Painters and Decorators: Melby & Anderson
  5. Original plans and construction: Destroyed
  6. Alterations and additions: The Paxton Carnegie Library was first altered in the 1980s when the basement was renovated to better utilize the space. At this time a fire exit was also added to the north façade of the building in a small brick vestibule. This was done to bring the building up to code and provide a fire escape when the basement of the library became inhabitable. In 1991 an elevator was installed at the south entrance to make the building completely accessible. In 1997 the children's library was moved to the basement and the old children's library became the current first floor reading room. Exterior storm windows were added in 2007.
- B. Historical Context: The first library in Paxton appeared in the early 1890s as a lean-to addition to the Methodist Church. This library closed in 1898 and the books were given to the public school. From 1899-1902 a subscription library was maintained in a local drugstore, providing all library services for the area. During this time Mr. E.B. Pitney worked to develop a tax-supported library. Through his work at an insurance company, he met Carnegie's secretary Mr. Bertram, which led to an application for a Carnegie Grant for a public library for Paxton. On March 20, 1903 the town of Paxton received a grant for \$10,000. The library was completed in 1904 by the architectural firm of Paul O. Moratz of Bloomington and dedicated on June 27, 1903.

The Classic Revival/Beaux Arts Style was a typical style for libraries constructed in the late 1800s and early 1900s. All of the typical features of a Classic Revival library can be found in the Paxton Carnegie Library: evenly spaced columns, stone construction, a pediment, a long flight of stairs, a flat/slightly hipped roofline, a dome, and windows accented by contrasting masonry lintels.

## PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The building style is Classical Revival/Beaux Arts.
2. Condition of fabric: Overall, the building is in good condition.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: 53'-1" x 53'-3". The building is one story, with a basement and an attic. It has the overall form of a rectangular building plan intersected by a rotunda at the southwest corner.
2. Foundations: Brick masonry construction with a common bond 16" thick walls
3. Walls: Tan brick masonry construction with a common bond. Ornamental features include engaged columns with Doric capitals. Egg and dart molding appears in a decorative entablature above several windows on the west and south facades. Every window and door has a limestone sill and a limestone lintel.
4. Structural System, framing: Wood frame construction on brick bearing walls
5. Stoops: Cast-in-place concrete slabs used to create front stoop.
6. Chimneys: One brick square chimney is located off the rotunda with a fireplace found in the reading room on the first floor and in the basement.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The most significant entry is the front entry, which approached by stair and has a temple front style. This door is a modern metal double door with sidelights and a transom. There are two limestone pilasters on each side with a small fixed five pane window between the door and the pilaster on either side. The presses metal tympanum has dentil molding and lettering which reads "Paxton Carnegie Library." There is an accessible

entrance on the south side. This doorway is flanked by fixed modern storefront windows and topped with a transom and pediment. An accessible ramp goes up to the door. On the north side there is an exit door, it is located on a brick enclosure for exit stairway from the basement.

- b. Windows and shutters: Windows are double-hung sash windows with one over one light configuration, accented on the exterior with contrasting masonry lintels. They are double hung and are at the first floor level as well as at the basement level.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Hip roof covered with asphalt shingles, with the rotunda dome at the southwest corner
- b. Cornice, eaves: Decorative brick cornice with a small copper square gutter
- c. Rotunda Dome: There is a dome at the southwest corner. It is a wood framed structure covered with copper sheathing. There are six evenly spaced double hung windows with transoms as well as six small double hung windows at the basement level. The entablature is comprised of decorative brickwork.

C. Description of Interior

- 1. Floor plans: The overall plan of the building consists of a rectangular space joining with a rotunda reading room. The librarians' desk is in the center of the main floor.
- 2. Stairways: One stairway. One straight-run stairway leads from the accessible access vestibule on the south side of the building to the first floor. There is an access panel in the librarian's bathroom, which provides access to the attic. It is accessible by a ladder.
- 3. Flooring: The main floor has pine wood flooring. The entry vestibules have mosaic tile flooring. The basement has carpeting.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster finish walls and ceilings with white paint throughout first floor.
- 5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Original quarter sawn oak wood doors throughout the first floor.
  - b. Windows: Windows are wood-frame, single-pane, double-hung units. Select windows are fixed, wood-frame units. There also some small arched, stained glass windows set higher, above where the rest of the windows. Two of these are located on the east wall.

6. Decorative features and trim:

- a. Columns and pilasters: There are four wooden Doric columns on the main floor and six wooden Doric pilasters. (See drawings)
- b. Fireplace: The fireplace is located in the main reading room under the rotunda. It has a marble surround and wood mantle. (See drawings)

7. Hardware: Bronze decorative hardware, (See drawings)

8. Mechanical Equipment:

- a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: There is a modern forced air heating, venting, and air conditioning system as well as a hot water boiler and radiators located beneath all of the windows on the main floor.
- b. Lighting: Hanging decorative chandeliers are located in the main spaces of the first floor. Task lighting are placed between the book shelves.
- c. Plumbing: The original plumbing system remains in the librarian's office. Newer plumbing exists in the basement from when additional accessible restrooms were added.
- d. Elevator: An Otis elevator installed at the south entrance to make the building completely accessible stops at the entry level, basement and first floor.

9. Original Furnishings: Quarter sawn oak wooden built-in bookshelves are located on the main floor.

D. Site: The building faces west on the corner of Market Street and Orleans Street in downtown Paxton, Illinois.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

Bobinski, George. *Carnegie Libraries in Illinois: Their History and Impact on American Public Library Development*. American Library Association, 1969.

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. "Illinois Carnegie Libraries Multiple Property Submission." Received January 6, 1994. <http://www.illinoishistory.gov/PS/carnegieliibraries.htm>

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Steinbacher, Bill. "From Our Past: Libraries among architect's most recognized work." Posted April 29, 2007. [http://www.pantagraph.com/news/article\\_c9e115c9-9348-57b6-9c1d-da97ef021df1.html](http://www.pantagraph.com/news/article_c9e115c9-9348-57b6-9c1d-da97ef021df1.html)

#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Historians: Laura Mann, Krista Weir

Project Information: This report was prepared by students for the course ARCH 518 Recording Historic Structures at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the fall of 2011, Professor Paul Hardin Kapp (instructor); Brodie Bricker, Travis Dean, Shellie Halkyard, Adnahn Humayun, Jarrell Johnson, Shaefer Kirby, Laura Mann, Lauren Nurse, Curt Pratt, Theresa Scott, John Timmerman, and Krista Weir.