

CHERRYDALE LIBRARY
2190 North Military Road
Arlington
Virginia

HABS VA-1439
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CHERRYDALE LIBRARY

HABS No. VA-1439

Location: 2190 North Military Road, in Arlington County, Virginia.

The coordinates for the Cherrydale Library are 38.8987N, 77.109286W; these were obtained using Google Earth in August 2010 and, it is assumed, NAD 1983. There is no restriction on the release of the locational data to the public.

Description: Built into a hillside, the Cherrydale Library blends into the residential neighborhood keeping both the wooded lot and small scale of its domestic architectural surroundings. Negotiating the terrain presented the largest design challenge, requiring an extensive retaining wall and entrances on multiple levels.¹ The exterior materials include stone and concrete shingles while the interior features walnut shelving and a walnut circulation desk. The street front is primarily glass, lighting the reading room and contributing to the spacious feeling established by the open floor plan. The first floor contains reading rooms, book shelves, circulation and storage with a balcony or mezzanine above.² There is a parking lot behind the building.

Date: 1961.

History: The library was designed by J. Russell Bailey, AIA,³ and constructed by the general contractor, Earl K. Kosti.⁴ Work on the site started in 1960 and the building was completed in August the following year.⁵ The Cherrydale Library was the first neighborhood branch library to have a purpose-built structure; others were operating in retrofitted facilities. The proximity of the Cherrydale library to the new central library elicited some criticism, but the neighborhood successfully lobbied to keep their branch open.

¹ The difficulties of the site are what Judson Gardner remembered, recounted during his presentation for the 50th anniversary ceremony; see also, "Cherrydale Branch Library in Arlington," *Virginia Record* n.d., 14, in clipping files, Virginia Room, Arlington County Public Library.

² "Library Walk Is Beautiful," 24 July 1961, in clipping files, Virginia Room, Arlington County Public Library.

³ Information about the architect is available through the American Institute of Architects and the database, Historical Directory of American Architects that contains digital copies of the membership records (www.aia.org, accessed 15 August 2011) as well as reference to another building project in the Philadelphia Architects and Buildings database (www.philadelphiabuildings.org, accessed 15 August 2011). Bailey was a member of the AIA from 1947 until his death.

⁴ Kosti was recognized by the Northern Virginia Builders Association in 1962 for their work on the library, particularly the lighting, cathedral ceilings, and exposed brick interior. Kosti entered the library project in the "institutional projects financed with public funds" category. See "Another Winner in Northern Virginia," *Washington Post* 24 February 1962.

⁵ "Ceremony Signals Start on Cherrydale Library," 5 September 1960; "New Library Patrons Can't Wait for Rites," 14 August 1961; in clipping files, Virginia Room, Arlington County Public Library.

Cherrydale had been served by a branch library since 1923. The library continued to outgrow its space, moving from schoolhouse to firehouse and ultimately to the bungalow on Lee Highway. The bungalow fell victim to a road-widening project, and advocates for the Cherrydale Library campaigned for its relocation to a new building. Permission to purchase the land on Military Road was granted in 1959 and Bailey was retained for architectural plans for the new library facility.⁶

Periodically the neighborhood must rally around its library, reiterating publically and to public officials just how important branch libraries are, and the Cherrydale Library's integral role in the surrounding community.⁷ Its resiliency, and vibrancy, was noted in the 50-year anniversary of the library building's opening in summer 2011. Judson Gardner, one of the staff architects working for Bailey and later a partner in the firm, attended the ceremony.⁸

Sources: This summary is drawn from clipping files in the Virginia Room of the Arlington County Public Library, files relating to the library system in the Community Archives (RG 29), permit records/house cards on file with the Arlington County Historic Preservation Office, and a site visit in December 2010 with the HABS Photographer, James Rosenthal.

Historian: Virginia B. Price, 2011.

⁶ "Cherrydale Library Operated Under Sponsorship of Parent-Teachers," *Sun* 8 October 1936, 3; "Arlington Planners Stall Cherrydale Library Work," [December 1959]; "Cherrydale Wins Fight, New Library Is Promised," 21 December 1959; "New Library Sketch Given Cherrydale Ok," 28 January 1960; "Arlington Board Takes Branch Library Action," n.d.; in clipping files, Virginia Room, Arlington County Public Library.

⁷ See, for example, "Cherrydale Library Serves Definite Need," 5 April 1977; "Residents Rally for Branch Library," 6 March 1992; in clipping files, Virginia Room, Arlington County Public Library; as well as the "branch fact sheet" prepared in October 1986 (5000 patrons a month on average, 7500 circulation).

⁸ "Cherrydale Library at 50," *Sweet&Sour News The Bi-Monthly Newsletter of the Cherrydale Citizens Association* (July-August 2011): 1.