

## **115th Street Branch of the New York Public Library**

Individual Landmark

203 West 115th Street

Designation Date: July 12, 1967



*The 115th Street Branch of the New York Public Library. Photo by Lorraine Colbert*

To come unexpectedly upon the 115th Street Branch of the New York Public Library on a residential street, occupied primarily by four- and five-story brownstones, is to experience a pleasant surprise. Such is the architectural character of this branch library, with its facade designed in the Italian Renaissance style. Built in 1908, the exterior of this three-story structure is faced with gray limestone with deeply grooved horizontal jointing (rustication). Its design is stately and, like an Italian palazzo, has great dignity and distinction.

The design emphasizes the theme of three widely spaced windows. On the first and second floors, the great round-headed windows have arches of rusticated stones. These are carried upward to meet the horizontal band course that forms the window sill level of the next story, and the horizontal joints of masonry, creating an unusually interesting linear composition. The westernmost arched opening at the first floor has glass entrance doors. Above the adjoining central window and superimposed over its arch is a handsomely sculptured stone cartouche (shield) containing the city's coat of arms, and supported by two cherubic angels bearing garlands. Relief from austerity is achieved by delicate scrollwork in the horizontal band course at second floor level. A heavy, projecting, stone cornice, carried on ornate brackets, effectively terminates the facade at the top.

In 1901, Andrew Carnegie offered New York the generous gift of \$5,200,000 to build branches of the Public Library throughout the City. This building was erected with money from the Andrew Carnegie Fund. The city purchased land in strategic locations, usually two- to three-acre lots for a site. The buildings were almost always three stories high, and the style was overwhelmingly classic in character, following the influence of the Chicago World's Fair and our architects' training in Europe. This branch was designed by McKim, Mead & White.

[Read the full NYC LPC designation report here.](#)