

## **125th Street Branch of the New York Public Library**

Individual Landmark

224 East 125th Street

Designation Date: January 13, 2009



*The New York Public Library, 125th Street, 224 East 125th Street, Main (North) Elevation. New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission The New York Public Library, 125th Street Branch Designation Report. Photo by Christopher Brazee, 2008.*

The 125th Street Branch of the New York Public Library is notable for being one of the Carnegie libraries and a significant Renaissance Revival style building by the important firm of McKim, Mead, & White.

The library was the third Carnegie branch of the New York Public Library to open and has served the Harlem community for more than 100 years. Made possible by a grant of \$5.2 million from Andrew Carnegie to the City of New York to establish a city-wide branch library system, a total of 67 branch libraries were constructed between 1901 and 1929. Of those, 57 are still standing, and 54 are still in operation.

The firm of McKim, Mead & White, one of the most notable and influential architecture firms in the country, designed twelve of the New York Public Library Carnegie Branches, and played a major part in the formulation of the libraries' design guidelines. The firm's

philosophy was that the libraries were designed to serve two purposes: to be specific to their neighborhood, yet universal in character, and to be expressive of a municipal building type.

The striking Renaissance Revival-style building is of the palazzo type. The building is clad in rusticated Indiana limestone and is three stories high and three bays wide. Large arched windows dominate the first floor with an entrance offset to the right with an arched glass transom above. The tall second-floor window openings are topped by arched decorative transom panels. The third floor has three small square windows that pierce the façade, creating a clerestory.

The Carnegie libraries continue to be enormously important to the communities they serve, and to the city.

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