

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Jennings Carnegie Public Library is located on a corner lot on the outskirts of the Jennings central business district. It is constructed of buff brick with white painted wood trim.

The 1908 Palladian style building has a "V" shaped plan, One enters at the bottom of the "V" into an octagonal domed rotunda which contains the circulation desk. Connected to the rotunda are a pair of three-bay arched wings set at 45 to the entrance. These wings contain the stacks.

The specific features of the building were derived from the sixteenth century Italian Renaissance. The entrance facade consists of a Serlian motif encompassed by a set of four free-standing Corinthian columns which are surmounted by a full entablature, a parapet, and the aforementioned dome. Both the upper surfaces of the dome and the two pitched roofs are covered in red tile. The rotunda is defined by an octagonal arcade with a Composite column engaged against each pier.

The interiors of the wings were remodeled in 1952. As a result, the round arch windows are the only 1908 interior features that remain. Also at this time the south wing was extended by four bays. The original brickwork and articulation were duplicated in the addition.

Specific dates 1908
Builder/Architect Whitfield & King, Architects - New York, N. Y.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
Criterion C

The Jennings Carnegie Public Library is significant in the area of architecture as a landmark in the architectural heritage of the city of Jennings. Most of the buildings in the downtown area are more or less standard early twentieth century commercial buildings. They have shallow arch windows, brick cornices, parapets, and brick pilasters. By contrast, the library has a dome, a rotunda, free-standing Corinthian columns, and a Serlian motif entrance. It is one of the smaller buildings in the central business district, but it is easily the most "high style."

Historical sketch:

The movement for a public library in Jennings can be traced to the year 1885, when several women in the town formed an organization which would soon be known as the Ladies Library Association. In 1889 the group purchased a house and lot on Main Street and set up Jennings' first public library. The ladies relied upon donations of books, money, and furnishings as well as funds they raised themselves. This building burned in 1901, and in the following year, the Ladies Library Association purchased the site of the present building. The organization then began negotiations with Andrew Carnegie for a gift for a new library in Jennings. The ladies were successful, and on February 5, 1907, the city voted to accept Carnegie's offer to donate \$10,000 for a library building to be erected on the site donated by the Ladies Library Association. The city also voted to appropriate \$1,000 per year for maintaining the library. The structure was completed in 1903.

The State Review Committee requested that it be noted that the building's V-shaped plan is an unusual and creative solution to the problem of a prominent corner lot.

Bibliography

Conveyance Records

Minutes, February 5, 1907, Jennings Board of Aldermen.

Act of Incorporation, Ladies Library Society of Jennings, September 19, 1889.

Hildebrand, Franklin. As I Remember. Creative Publishing, November 1977 and March 1978.

Morse, Walter D. Birth of Jennings. Tribune Printing Company of Lafayette, Louisiana, June 1963.

Specifications for Jennings Carnegie Public Library. Originals in possession of Jennings Carnegie Public Library.