

Carnegie Library building nomination information

Description:

The Livermore Carnegie Library building is an example of Classical Revival architecture, with a pedimental central projecting portico and slightly projecting side bays. The pediment is supported by two pairs of Greek Ionic columns resting on raised bases. A low parapet surrounds the roof, rising behind the pediment which, with entablature, is emphasized by large dentils. Quoins at the corners and projections are of a light color matching the foundation and contrasting with the yellow brick of the façade. Brick and other materials were obtained from the nearby Carnegie Brick Works. [in Corral Hollow on Tesla Road, east of Livermore.] Centered within a full city block, the building's site is raised on all sides from the surrounding walkways, From the fountain in front, steps rise in two tiers between two solid rails and a pair of light standards. At the entrance are double doors under a tall rounded arch of clear glass divided vertically, united under a transom with Union Jack motif. Side and rear windows are tall, narrow, slightly recessed, and double-hung. Horizontal bands recur in the band above the basement level and horizontal grooves in the foundation. The interior craftsmanship is notable and has been maintained.

In 1977 the building exterior was sandblasted, repainted and restored to its original colors. Alterations are few, and include improvements to the plumbing and provision of an emergency exit. More recently, an exterior elevator has been installed near the emergency exit door to meet ADA requirements.

Significance:

The Livermore library traces its beginnings to the Livermore Library and Dramatic Association of 1878, where one could

purchase a life membership for \$3.00. But the Association fell on financial hard times and the library was closed about 1883. The assets of the library (the building, books, shelving and furnishings) were acquired and held in trust by the Social Club.

In 1896 the Livermore Ladies League of Progress revived the library. A new association was created through the sale of shares in a "corporation of public benefit" for \$1.00 each, which enabled the group to purchase the library assets from the Social Club. By 1901 the Livermore Free Library was functioning. In September of that year, by City Ordinance No. 42, it became a public library, and said to be the first publicly funded library in a California 6th class city.

A Carnegie application was submitted in 1908, and \$10,000 was granted in August, 1909. Several sites were considered and reports of the price of the lot ranged from \$9,000 to \$10,000. An election was held December 17, 1909, for approval of the park bonds to develop the site. The architect William H. Weeks, who designed more than twenty California Carnegie buildings, also designed the fountain in front of the building. The successful construction bid from Hoyt Bros., Santa Rosa, came in at \$10,640, so the additional funds were raised by means of minstrel shows, dramatic performances and Hayseed Club balls. The building opened for public viewing on May 11, 1911.

When a new library was completed in September, 1966, strong public concern succeeded in saving the building which now houses the Livermore Heritage Guild's History Center and the Livermore Art Association.

The building was designated a local historic landmark by City Council resolution No. 189-87 on July 17, 1987.