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Georgia Library Spotlight - Carnegie Branch Library, Live Oak Public Libraries

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GLA SPOTLIGHT

Carnegie Branch Library Live Oak Public Libraries

The Carnegie Branch Library in Savannah, Georgia celebrated its centennial anniversary with a Georgia Historical Marker dedication ceremony held on August 13, 2014. Nestled majestically amongst a tree line belt on East Henry Street, the Carnegie Branch Library is part of Live Oak Public Libraries.

Carnegie Library has rich roots embedded in the African American community of Savannah. Today it remains a focal point for educational programs and a community meeting space. The historical marker acknowledges the significance African American Savannahians and others placed on education and scholarly research one hundred years ago.

Since 1903, the African American community of Savannah spiritedly debated the need for a public library of their own. In 1906, black community leaders founded the Colored Library Association of Savannah. The twelve original founders were: A.L. Tucker, Julian Smith, J.W. Armstrong, E.E. Desverney, J.T. Burton, Henry Pearson, Dr. F. S. Belcher, H.H. McBeth, G.W. Jacobs, L.S. Reed, R.W. Gadson, and C.A.R. McDowell. In 1913, a petition was sent forth to the Carnegie Corporation for funding, and construction began in 1914. The building was dedicated later that year on August 14.

The building is the only example of Prairie Style architecture within the city. The regal staircase leading to the main entrance on the second floor is framed by two enormous piers with sandstone orbs on small pedestals. Narrow vertical windows with rectangular transoms are also characteristic of the Prairie Style. The entrance is flanked by two sconces with large

glass globes and is ornamented above the doorway with an open book with the inscription "Carnegie Library."



Carnegie has a warm familiar feel. While small and quaint, it also offers a full array of services, programs, and technology resources many library users of the twenty-

first century have come to expect. It also houses an extensive African American reference collection and remains a beloved structure within the community. Among famous visitors are James Alan McPherson, Pulitzer Prize-winning short story writer and essayist, and Clarence Thomas, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

The library is seeing renewed interest from students, tourists, and visitors as well as the wider community of residents. New generations of users often encounter many local senior residents who freely share their stories of growing up in the Carnegie Library. They also remind younger generations how important the library was to their education and encourage younger users to appreciate the importance of libraries.