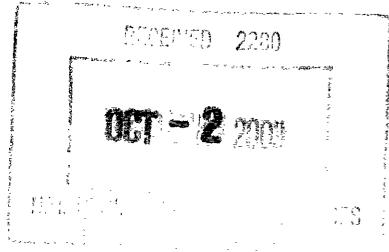


(Oct. 1990)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**



1162

**1. NAME OF PROPERTY**

**HISTORIC NAME:** George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
**OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER:** Carver Community Cultural Center

**2. LOCATION**

**STREET & NUMBER:** 226 North Hackberry Street  
**CITY OR TOWN:** San Antonio  
**STATE:** Texas      **CODE:** TX      **COUNTY:** Bexar      **CODE:** 029      **ZIP CODE:** 78202  
**NOT FOR PUBLICATION:** N/A  
**VICINITY:** N/A

**3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*[Handwritten Signature]*

9-30-03

Signature of certifying official

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

*for*  
*Edson H. Beall*  
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action  
11-15-03

---

**5. CLASSIFICATION**

---

**OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY:** Public

**CATEGORY OF PROPERTY:** Building

<b>NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:</b>	<b>CONTRIBUTING</b>	<b>NONCONTRIBUTING</b>
	1	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	0	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	1	0 TOTAL

**NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER:** 0

**NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING:** N/A

---

**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

---

**HISTORIC FUNCTIONS:** Recreation & Culture/Auditorium; Education/Library

**CURRENT FUNCTIONS:** Recreation & Culture/Auditorium

---

**7. DESCRIPTION**

---

**ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:** Modern Movement: Art Deco

**MATERIALS:** FOUNDATION CONCRETE  
WALLS MASONRY  
ROOF ASPHALT  
OTHER CAST STONE

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION** (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-8).

---

**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

---

**APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA**

**A** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY.

**B** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST.

**C** PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION.

**D** PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD, INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY.

**CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS: G**

**AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:** Ethnic Heritage/Black; Performing Arts; Architecture

**PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE:** 1929-1954

**SIGNIFICANT DATES:** 1930 (opening); 1950 (addition); 1954 (desegregation)

**SIGNIFICANT PERSON:** N/A

**CULTURAL AFFILIATION:** N/A

**ARCHITECT/BUILDER:** Seutter & Simons (1929); Leo M.J. Dielmann (1950); Haywood, Jordan, McGowan (1975-76;1986)

**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE** (see continuation sheets 8-8 through 8-20).

---

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES**

---

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** (see continuation sheets 9-21 and 9-22).

**PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS):** N/A

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:**

State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)

Other state agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other -- Specify Repository: *County Records, San Antonio Public Library*

---

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

---

**ACREAGE OF PROPERTY:** less than one acre

**UTM REFERENCES**     Zone Easting Northing  
                              14    551170   3254685

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION** The site is comprised of the northwest portion of NCB 592, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. It is bounded on the north by Center Street, on the west by Hackberry Street.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION** The lot and block descriptions were redefined in the 1980s, resulting in a U-shaped lot, with the Carver Branch Library building occupying northwest portion of the lot. The boundaries encompass all property associated with the building since the 1980s, under ownership by the City of San Antonio.

---

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

---

**NAME/TITLE:** Maria Watson Pfeiffer

**ORGANIZATION:** ReSearch

**DATE:** June 2003

**STREET & NUMBER:** 213 Washington Street

**TELEPHONE:** (210) 222-1586

**CITY OR TOWN:** San Antonio

**STATE:** TX

**ZIP CODE:** 78204-1336

---

**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION**

---

**CONTINUATION SHEETS**

**MAPS** (see continuation sheet Figure-23)

**PHOTOGRAPHS** (see continuation sheet Photo-29)

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS**

---

**PROPERTY OWNER**

---

**NAME:** City of San Antonio/ Terry Brechtel, City Manager

**STREET & NUMBER:** P.O. Box 839966

**TELEPHONE:** (210) 207-7080

**CITY OR TOWN:** San Antonio

**STATE:** TX

**ZIP CODE:** 78283-3966

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Section 7 Page 5

---

The George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium (1929/1950/1986) is a one and 2-story brown brick Art Deco building with cast stone trim. It is constructed of tile faced in raked brick, has a cast stone base, and is capped with plain cast stone parapet trim. The 1929 building features Egyptian Revival detailing. Architects for the building were Seutter and Simons (1929), Leo M.J. Dielmann (1950), and Haywood, Jordan and McGowan (1986). As originally constructed, the building consisted of a square, 1-story library with adjoining 2-story auditorium. Two side bays were added to the library in 1950, and support facilities (offices, dressing rooms, etc.) were added in 1986. In addition to four original side doors, a main entrance was added on west elevation in 1975-76. On the interior, a north/south hallway separates the old library space (now the lobby/gallery) from the auditorium. The hallway contains original decorative tile, stenciling, and the old box office. Stairs with simple iron railings and balusters lead to the balcony and basement restrooms. When the library closed in 1973, the building was renovated as a performance and meeting facility, and the library space was converted to a lobby and gallery. In 1986, a raked floor was installed and the stage was extended forward to facilitate performances. Renovations are underway in 2003 to meet current building codes, make structural repairs, and restore interior and exterior finishes. The Carver retains much of its original integrity and is a good example of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Art Deco public architecture.

---

The George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium is a brown, raked brick structure with cast stone trim decorated with Egyptian Revival detailing (photo 1). It was constructed in 1929, with additions in 1950 and 1986. The building is comprised of a 1-story lobby/gallery that originally served as the library (1929 with additions in 1950), a 2-story auditorium and stage house (1929), and a 1-story addition housing dressing rooms and other ancillary functions (1986).

The building is entered through double doors located on the primary (west) elevation up a central flight of tiled stairs. This entrance was created in 1975-76 when the building was renovated as a performance and meeting space. The 1-story lobby portion of the building, originally the library, consists of a central room with side bays. The bays, added in 1950 to expand the library, project forward 17' from the face of the original building and are lower in height than the original structure. They are of tile construction faced in brick that closely matches the 1929 construction. The bays are capped on their north, south and west sides in stepped, cast stone parapet trim. Cast stone parapet trim decorated with Egyptian motifs spans the original portion of the building above the entrance, and extends around the north, east, and south sides of the building. Prior to the addition of the side bays, the auditorium was 8'4" wider than the original library structure on either side.

The projecting side bays each contain two multi-light, metal windows. A door opens into the lobby from each of these bays. The doors have plain, cast stone surrounds with a central, articulated keystone. On either side of the main, double entrance doors are two multi-light steel frame windows, and above the doors are three rectangular windows. Simple round cast stone panels are centered above the three sets of windows. The opening for the main entrance was created in the 1975-76 renovation by cutting the cast stone base and removing the lower panels of the center three windows.

As originally designed, patrons entered the building from doors on the north and south sides of the building. A central hallway on the north/south axis provided access into the library and auditorium. In 1950, single doors were placed in the side bays, but there was no "grand entrance." The central, wide stairway and double doors filled that void. The main doors and those in the side bays are modern paneled wood. A wooden portico added in the 1976 renovation has been removed. No historic pictures of the building's exterior have been located to date.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Section 7 Page 6

---

On the north elevation, the 1-story projecting bay has three sets of windows in a 2/3/2 pattern (photo 2). There is a single, multi-light window where the bay turns the corner and meets the original structure. Immediately east of the juncture of the 1950 bay and original building, is a side entrance door. Above the door in cast stone are the words "1929- Colored Branch of the San Antonio Library and Auditorium" (photo 3). A second, identical door is located at the northeast corner of the building. Moving east along the ground floor of the north elevation, there are five rectangular, multi-light, steel frame windows. A tall, cast stone base extends along the entire length of the north façade.

At its upper level, the north elevation of the 2-story auditorium structure has seven tall, multi-pane, steel frame windows, each with a decorative cast stone panel below it (photo 4). The first window at the northwest corner, located directly over the entry door, is topped with a decorative cast stone panel reflecting the Egyptian motifs of the parapet cap. Moving east, a metal fire escape descends from a doorway leading to the balcony. Continuing east, five tall, multi-pane steel frame windows are separated by raised brick pilasters topped with decorative cast stone panels (photo 5). At the northeast corner of the building over the entrance door, there is a single matching windows topped with a cast stone panel, reflecting the same fenestration found at the northeast corner. A small loading door with cast stone sill has been added. The 1986 addition meets the 1929 building at its northeast corner. This addition is brick in brown tones to blend with the original structure. It has a cast stone base to match that of the original structure and is capped with plain cast stone parapet trim that extends around the east and south sides of the building.

The south elevation of the building is a mirror image of the north side with some exceptions (photo 6). Here, the 1986 addition obscures a portion of the 1929 building, covering the eastern entry door with its inscription—"1929- Colored Branch of the San Antonio Library and Auditorium." This door is still visible from an interior hallway in the 1986 structure. A square brick structure infills the corner where the 1929 building meets the 1986 addition, providing a fire exit.

The east elevation of the 1929 structure is obscured at its lower level by the 1986 addition (photo 2). This 1986 elevation is plain except for a loading door and one double exit door at the southeast corner. The original stage house and auditorium rise above this addition, and have no fenestration. The auditorium is taller than the stage house, creating a stepped roofline. Cooling equipment is located on the building's flat, built-up roof.

The library and auditorium were originally entered through the side doors described above. While the easternmost doors led directly into the auditorium, the westernmost doors led into a hallway separating the library and auditorium. The 1929 building had little interior detailing, and most of it was located in this hallway. The floor is of decorative concrete tile in a green and orange pattern (photo 7). The base is green tile and the beige tile wainscoting, with a pattern in orange and green, is topped with a solid green band. The walls are plastered above the tile (photo 8). A stepped crown molding runs along the east and west walls at the ceiling line. Three stenciled medallions in a beige, red, brown and green pattern were recently exposed when the suspended ceiling was removed. A single electrical fixture once hung from each medallion (photo 9).

At the north and south ends of the hallway, concrete stairs rise to the balcony and descend to the basement level bathrooms. The bathrooms are strictly utilitarian. The balusters on the stairs to the balcony are iron in an Art Deco pattern and the railing is polished wood. There are a total of 42 steps leading to the balcony.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Section 7 Page 7

---

The balcony has eight rows of seating. The original brass railing was replaced with a modern metal and glass railing to improve sight lines. A modern control booth was installed in the center of the balcony. Doors on the north and south walls of the balcony lead to fire escapes. The walls are plastered and the floors are carpeted. There is no decoration.

The library was originally entered through a single door in the west wall of the hallway that was flanked by raised pilasters. At some time, the door was sealed and two modern, double doors were cut on either side, probably to meet fire code. Along the west wall of the hallway are two reveals that once held steam radiators.

The library space, converted to a lobby in 1975-76, contains little detailing (photo 10). A stepped crown molding matching that found in the hallway extends around the original library space. The 1950 side bays have no decoration. The floor is concrete and the walls and ceiling are plastered. The ceiling height in the central room is approximately 13' and in the side bays, approximately 11'. Historic photographs indicate that the room originally had cork floor covering. They show simple library furnishings and no additional decoration (photos 11 & 12).

The original box office is located along the east wall of the hallway (photo 8). It is constructed of beige tile framed in wood and trimmed in a sawtooth pattern. Plain wood, double doors to either side of the box office lead into the auditorium. A small office and handicapped ramp have been partitioned at the rear of the auditorium.

The auditorium had a flat floor until 1986 when a raked floor was installed to improve sight lines. New, fixed seating was also installed at that time. (The original flat floor accommodated a wide variety of functions, including dances.) In 1986, the stage was extended forward from the simple proscenium arch to provide greater depth. The only decoration in the auditorium is exhibited in openings on the north and south walls to either side of the stage. These are trimmed in plaster with Egyptian motifs. Molded baffles installed in 1986 to control sound and shield equipment extend up the walls and across the ceiling.

The interior of the 1986 addition is strictly utilitarian. It is partitioned into dressing rooms, offices, and bathrooms. It contains storage space, a kitchen, a small dance rehearsal space, and a rear loading dock. On the south side, the addition wraps around the 1929 structure, providing a long hallway with fire doors at the east and west ends. Modern tile wainscoting extends along the north side of the hallway. The 1929 brick exterior and southeast entry door, and a portion of the 1929 east wall, all obscured from the exterior by the addition, are visible on the interior.

The Carver occupies the majority of the site. An asphalt parking lot is located to the rear (east) of the building and is enclosed by a simple iron fence with plastered columns. A grassy easement with five large live oak trees lines Center Street along the building's northern edge. The trees obscure the view of this elevation. To the west, a sidewalk separates the building from Hackberry Street, a major north/south thoroughfare (photo 13). On the south, a vacant area separates the Carver from the Carver Academy. A portion of this area was once the old Gibbs Street right-of-way. To the rear, the two facilities are separated by a landscaped walkway and simple iron fence. Gates provide access between the buildings.

The Carver is located within the City of San Antonio's Dignowity Hill Historic District. It is immediately northeast of the Friedrich Building (NR 2002), one block west of the San Antonio City Cemeteries Historic District (NR 2000), and five blocks east of the Southern Pacific Depot Historic District (NR 1979).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Section 8 Page 8

---

The George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium was constructed in 1929 (with additions in 1950 and 1986) as the “Colored Branch of the San Antonio Library and Auditorium.” The building stands at the southeast corner of North Hackberry and Center Streets on San Antonio’s near-east side. The facility was constructed on the site of the old Colored Recreation Center, opened in 1919 as a cooperative venture of War Camp Community Service and the Colored Library Association. The Recreation Center became a popular gathering place for soldiers returning from World War I and local residents who were denied access to other facilities. The City of San Antonio purchased the property in 1925, and opened a branch of the public library here. A 1928 bond issue provided funds to construct a new library and auditorium on the site. The building, designed by local architects Carl Von Seutter and Malcolm Simons, opened in 1930. Until desegregation, the library and auditorium remained a vital educational and social gathering place for the African American community. The auditorium was renowned for appearances by leading African American performers including Louis “Satchmo” Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington, and Count Basie. Leading political and religious speakers also appeared here, and social clubs held dances, initiations, and meetings. After the library closed in 1973, the building was renovated as a performing arts and meeting facility, continuing its role as a venue for artistic programming and community discussion. The building closed in 2000 for renovation and is scheduled to reopen in early 2004. The Carver Community Cultural Center is significant under Criterion A (local level) in the areas of Black Heritage and Performing Arts as a gathering place for San Antonio’s African American community during the period of segregation, and a facility that remains a community meeting place and venue for multi-ethnic programming. It is also significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture as a good example of an Art Deco public building that retains its integrity in spite of remodeling and additions. The period of significance extends from 1929 until 1954, the year that the Supreme Court declared segregation unconstitutional and the City of San Antonio integrated its public facilities. Criteria Consideration G (*properties that have achieved significance within the last fifty years*) applies, as the building continued to function as a segregated library through 1954. The building is exceptionally significant as a prominent and well-preserved physical reminder of segregation in San Antonio, Texas.

---

The building known today as the Carver Community Cultural Center (generally called “the Carver”) was built in 1929 to serve as the “Colored Branch of the San Antonio Library and Auditorium.” This name is inscribed in cast stone above the four original entrances to the building. The Carver was constructed at the southeast corner of North Hackberry and Center Streets on San Antonio’s near-east side. The area, located east of the Southern Pacific railroad tracks and north of East Commerce Street, was the residential, social, and commercial center of the city’s middle-class African American community. San Antonio’s segregated churches, funeral homes, schools, playground, and cemeteries were all located near the Carver.

The Carver stands on the former site of the city’s colored recreation center, a barracks-style building constructed in 1919 to serve soldiers returning from World War I (see figure 1). In 1925, the City of San Antonio acquired the recreation center and an adjacent house, and opened a branch of the Public Library there that same year. Following approval of bond funding for new libraries in 1928, the recreation center structure was moved, and the Carver was built on the site. Generally known as the “Library Auditorium,” the facility was named for George Washington Carver in 1938.

From the time of its completion through World War II, the Carver was a popular venue for leading African American entertainers. It also hosted renowned religious and political figures, and was the site of high school and college graduations and many community and social functions. Following desegregation, use of the library and auditorium declined, and the building deteriorated. The library closed when a new Carver Library was constructed on East Houston

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 9

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

---

Street in 1973. The date of the auditorium's closing has not been determined. The old building remained unused until 1976 when it was renovated and reopened in conjunction with the United States Bicentennial as the Carver Community Cultural Center.

The success of the Carver as a venue for multi-ethnic artistic programming and community events led to the addition in 1986 of modern support facilities including dressing rooms, offices, storage space, and a loading dock. Further work to address accessibility and abatement issues, modernize the heating and cooling system, and interior and exterior repairs and painting necessitated closure of the Carver in 2000. This work is ongoing and the Carver is scheduled to re-open in 2004.

## The Origins of the Carver: 1903-1918

### **San Antonio's Carnegie Library**

In order to fully understand the significance of the Carver as both an institution and structure, it is necessary to discuss the early days of San Antonio's public library system and the race politics that created the city's segregated social institutions.

On January 6, 1900, Andrew Carnegie donated \$50,000 to the City of San Antonio to build a free public library. San Antonio's Carnegie Library, opened on June 15, 1903, was the third library funded by Carnegie in Texas (Carnegie Corporation Correspondence, Reel 28; Jones, 162). Houston and Dallas both were granted Carnegie funding in 1899.

Library services for San Antonio's African American community were a topic of discussion from the earliest days of the Carnegie library's operation. Minutes of the board's June 15, 1903, meeting record that "arrangements were made to see about instituting the Negro branch of the library" (LM, June 6, 1903). The day before the Carnegie opened, it was reported that arrangements had been made "for a branch of the Carnegie Library for the benefit of the colored citizens of San Antonio" (San Antonio *Daily Express*, June 14, 1903:5). The branch, "under the supervision of the Carnegie Library authorities," was located at Riverside Colored High School and stocked with several hundred volumes. In early July 1903, the board voted to hire A.S. Pryor to run the Colored Department at a salary of \$15.00 per month (LM, July 3, 1903).

The Carnegie branch library at Riverside School (soon renamed Douglass School) remained open only a few months. When the matter of a "colored branch" was discussed in later years, board members asked "why the library for the colored people in the Douglas (sic) School which was maintained for several months in 1903, had not been used" (LM, March 1, 1907). A representative of the African American community, Reverend Brown, answered that "he was not in San Antonio at the time, but he had understood that the quarters were small and undesirable (LM, March 1, 1907). This was likely Reverend T.A. Brown, an A.M.E. minister (San Antonio City Directory, 1909).

On July 7, 1905, board member, E.H. Terrell, reported that "he had not addressed Mr. Carnegie about the colored branch." The main reason cited by Terrell was the opposition of a board member who ostensibly felt that the branch would adversely impact the library's budget (LM, July 7, 1905). This discussion was not revived until 1907, when African Americans again petitioned the board for a library facility. Reverend Brown presented a petition and letter stating "the needs of the colored people for library facilities" (LM, March 1, 1907). Unfortunately, these documents are not included in the minutes, and the names of the petitioners have been lost.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 10

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

---

Not surprisingly, the board's discussion was inconclusive. Reverend Brown told the library board that "he thought the Colored people would be disposed to patronize a branch library if one were established." E.H. Terrell, responded that he thought the board "would again be willing to help them in the matter of library facilities whenever they showed a disposition to cooperate in the matter which they had not done in connection with the previous effort." They went on to mention sites including Douglass School and the Santa Clara School, another African American institution. Once again, the discussion ended and was not taken up by the Library board until the early 1920s.

Though the operation of the Riverside branch in 1903 was brief, it was among the early attempts to provide library services to African Americans in the South during an era of rising racial tensions. In some communities, African Americans could borrow books, but not read them on site, while in others, a room was set aside within the library or a separate branch was constructed. George Bobinski, an authority on the history of Carnegie Libraries, writes, "Although Carnegie was pleased when provisions were made for Negroes, he never attempted to foster integration with his donations" (Bobinski, 80-82).

While the Carnegie Corporation did not interfere with local politics, it did, on occasion, grant funds to build libraries for African Americans. One example was the segregated branch of Houston's public library that opened in 1912 (Texas Library Association, 1935). Correspondence between the Carnegie Corporation and those attempting to secure funding for a library in San Antonio includes no reference to a separate branch for African Americans (Carnegie Corporation Correspondence, Reel 28).

## The Origins of the Carver: 1917-1925

When the City's library board failed to provide library services for the African American community, the cause was taken up by the private sector. This was not uncommon. Bobinski notes that "Negroes often protested about their lack of facilities in most Carnegie libraries of the South" (Bobinski, 80-82). Like other Southern cities in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, San Antonio had already experienced racial unrest, including a streetcar boycott by African Americans in 1904 (Mason, 210-11). In 1917, John A. Grumbles, a railroad postal clerk, organized the state's second chapter of the National Association of Colored People in San Antonio. (The first was founded in El Paso in 1915.) By 1918, the local N.A.A.C.P. chapter was the largest in Texas, with 1,228 members (Mason, 212 & 215).

During this period of complicated race relations, San Antonio became a major mobilization center as the United States Army prepared for World War I. Among the many soldiers stationed in San Antonio at Camp Travis adjacent to Fort Sam Houston were members of the largely-African American 165<sup>th</sup> Depot Brigade. Segregation, both on and off-post, necessitated separate recreation centers to serve the soldiers. The Army constructed these facilities on the post, but looked to local organizations to provide social services for soldiers off the post.

Two centers for African American soldiers were constructed in San Antonio—both completed after the war ended. The first, and largest, was built at Camp Travis and opened on November 22, 1918 (San Antonio *Express*, November 17, 1918). The "Negro Community House" was described as an "amusement center for the 8,000 Negro soldiers now at Camp Travis." The building was said to accommodate 2,000 people and included a dance hall, dining area, kitchen, and lavatory.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

---

The Colored Recreation Center, the second and smaller of the two facilities, was built off-post at Hackberry and Center Streets, the site of today's Carver, in the heart of San Antonio's African American neighborhood. The facility, opened on January 19, 1919, initially contained a barbershop, baths, café and dance hall (*San Antonio Express*, January 19, 1919). The center was a collaborative project of two private organizations—the War Recreation Board, one of many such boards organized throughout the United States, and the Colored Library Association.

The War Recreation Board of San Antonio, Texas, was chartered on October 19, 1917, “for benevolent purposes and especially to organize the social and recreational resources of San Antonio for the well-fare of the soldiers of the United States Army. Though not explicitly stated, the organization's purpose included the provision of recreation services to both White and African American soldiers. The War Recreation Board changed its name twice, becoming the War Service Board, and on October 31, 1918, shortly before the armistice was signed, War Camp Community Service (Secretary of State, Charter 31731). Among the charter members of the organization were prominent White community leaders including merchant, Nat M. Washer; undertaker, Porter F. Loring; community activists Anna Hertzberg, Margaret Lewis, Ethel Tunstall Drought and Bettie Stevens; school superintendent, S.C. Meek; banker J.M. Bennett; Parks Commissioner, Ray Lambert; and J.V. Hucker and R.C. Jones, managers of the telephone and public service companies.

War Camp Community Service organizations were instrumental in providing services to African American soldiers stationed at military installations throughout the United States. The organization provided facilities where soldiers could read, play cards, listen to music, and dance. Those who were illiterate could find help with their correspondence and learn to read and write. It was estimated that by September 1919, shortly after the Colored Recreation Center opened in San Antonio, that War Camp Community Service was working in 97 communities in 30 states and the District of Columbia (*War Camp Community Service and the Negro Soldier*, 18).

The Colored Library Association was chartered on October 9, 1918, for “the support of a public library.” (Secretary of State, Charter 32595). The Association's papers of incorporation were signed by a who's who of San Antonio's African American activist community including Charles Bellinger (who would later head the city's strongest political machine), H.M. Tarver, F.E. Lewis, and George W. Bouldin (owner of the San Antonio *Inquirer* newspaper).

Though these groups cooperated to establish a facility that served each organization's stated mission, it is not known exactly how they came together. One source states that:

“Major Glover proposed to the Negro citizens of the city of San Antonio that if a suitable location was purchased by the Negroes of said city, that the Government would erect all necessary buildings, which would be known and designated as a library and community center for the said named citizens.” (Colored Library Association to City Council, April 17, 1922).

Glover's position at the time is not known, but in post-war years, he was the deputy Internal Collector of Revenue.

Kenneth Mason, in his study of local race relations, states that John Grumbles had begun to campaign for a segregated library as early as 1914, eventually winning support from the local political machine (Mason, 115). Whatever the genesis

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 12

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

---

of the facility, the week before the Colored Library Association was chartered, Grumbles purchased three lots at the corner of Hackberry and Center Streets for \$5,000 on October 1, 1918 (BCDR, 542:601-02).

John Grumbles was the acknowledged political leader of San Antonio's African American community. He was described as "energetic, fearless and forceful, and generally accomplishes what ever he goes after" (Mason, 212-13). Though not a charter member of the Colored Library Association, Grumbles was interested, for both political and social reasons, in remedying the lack of library services for San Antonio's African American residents. He not only purchased the property for the center, but apparently enlisted the support of the War Services Board to fund the facility as a way to provide services to African American soldiers (Mason, 115).

John Grumbles sold his property to the Colored Library Association on October 17, 1918, for \$5,000, and the same day, the Association leased the land to the War Services Board "from the present until demobilization at the termination of the War" (BCDR, 547:84; 550:324). Grumbles retained a lien on the property with the understanding that:

"the property and buildings were to be managed and maintained by the Government during the World War, after which it was understood that if the said citizens failed and refused to pay the said purchase price of the land... said property and buildings would revert to the said Mr. Grumbles." (Petition of Colored Library Association to City Council, April 17, 1922).

The Colored Library Association leased the land free of charge:

"...on the condition that the War Service Board will erect on the land at its expense a building to be used as a recreation hall and community center for colored soldiers and civilians in San Antonio, Texas. Said Center to be operated under the management and control of the War Service Board for the term of the war...at the end of the war, if the Colored Library Association gives assurance that it can maintain the building as a free public library for the colored people of San Antonio, the War Service Board will gift the property. If not assured, the War Service Board has the option to purchase the property at \$5,000." No matter what the outcome, it was agreed that the building would "be devoted to public use and will be used to maintain and operate and conduct a free public library for colored people."

On November 11, 1918, less than one month after the Colored Library Association and War Service Board entered into their agreement, the armistice ending World War I was signed. As demobilization began, the War Service Board (renamed War Camp Community Service) shifted the focus of its work to returning soldiers.

Plans to build the recreation hall and community center continued, and the facility known as the Community House, opened at 228 North Hackberry on January 19, 1919. "The house has just been completed at a considerable cost and is equipped with a barber shop, baths, café and dance hall." The director of the Community House was I.J. Campbell, the associate director of War Camp Community Service. It was stated in the White press that "those in charge of the Negro Community House will work in cooperation with the War Camp Community Service of San Antonio. J.A. Grumbles, local president of the National Association for the Advancement of Negroes, will be in immediate charge" (San Antonio *Express*, January 19, 1919, p. 12).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 13

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

---

The Community House, a frame, barracks-style facility, continued to operate in the post-war years. As stated in City Council records:

“During the World War, the War Service Board acquired property to conduct a community center for colored soldiers during the war. After the war, and the troops were demobilized, the property was used for a free library for colored people of San Antonio.” (CCM, 1:179, April 14, 1927).

Elderly San Antonio residents still recall attending dances there. Vera Ford’s family, who had lived away from San Antonio, returned to their nearby home in 1919 when she a child. She remained in San Antonio until the Depression began, and remembers that the Community House was used for both church services and social events. Mrs. Ford recalls that, though there were small nightclubs in the city, the Community House was the largest facility for dances, and that big bands frequently played there (Ford to Pfeiffer, April 19, 2003).

Though the Community House continued to operate, the Colored Library Association apparently did not make debt payments to John Grumbles who died after a lengthy illness on March 3, 1921. Grumbles’ obituary, published in the White press under the headline, “Wealthy Negro Dead,” stated:

“He was one of the leaders in war work among his race. He contributed the funds for the purchase of the Negro People’s Community House for the use of Negro soldiers during the war...” (San Antonio *Express*, March 3, 1921: 14).

After his death, Grumbles’ widow, Ella, sued the Colored Library Association to collect the debt owed on the Community Center property (Mason, 215-223). The suit apparently stemmed from a political disagreement between competing factions of the local N.A.A.C.P. By filing suit against the Colored Library Association, Mrs. Grumbles was attempting to prevent the organization from controlling the building and allowing competing N.A.A.C.P. factions from meeting there. Whatever the basis of this legal action, the Colored Library Association, unable to pay its debt to the Grumbles estate, petitioned the City Council to take over the facility to assure library services for African American residents.

On April 17, 1922, the Colored Library Association submitted a petition requesting that the City Council “take over the Community Property as a part of other city property and designate the same as a library center for the Negroes of the City of San Antonio” (Petition, April 17, 1922).

“The war is over and it is necessary for the lien upon said property to be released and turned over to the Negro citizens as was contemplated by both parties to the proposition (the Colored Library Association and War Service Board) as a library center”

The petitioners complained that the City had taxed all of its citizens to pay for the Carnegie Library, and committed to Mr. Carnegie to provide ongoing financial support for “the upkeep and maintenance of a public library for the citizens of San Antonio Texas.”

“...the Negro citizens although assessed and compelled to pay the same rate of taxes as the other citizens are refused admittance to said Carnegie library and cannot receive the benefits for which said library was established....”

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 14

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

---

The matter was finally resolved on June 12, 1925, when the 73<sup>rd</sup> District Court awarded Ella Grumbles a judgment of \$4,662.73. The Colored Library Association attempted, without success, to liquidate its debt, and on the first Tuesday in April 1926, the property was sold at auction to the City of San Antonio for \$5,300 (BCDR, 882:339). Members of the Colored Library Association voted to relinquish any claim on the property to the City “in order that this identical property be perpetuated to the colored citizens of San Antonio Texas for a free public library for colored persons.” The War Services Board also relinquished its claim to the property, stating, “The City of San Antonio is now ready, able, and willing to pay said debt and operate, conduct, and maintain a free public library for the colored people of San Antonio on said property.” Twenty-two years after the city’s public library opened, African American residents finally had access to tax-supported library services. (BCDR, 842:173-74; Deed File #6, City of San Antonio, City Clerk’s Office).

## The Origins of the Carver: 1925- 1929

The Carnegie Library board had provided “a small collection of books” to African Americans at both Brackenridge School and Douglass High School as early as 1923, and appointed a committee to meet with “Negroes of the community house” to discuss a supply of books (LM, February 9, 1923; March 9, 1923; Carnegie Library 20<sup>th</sup> annual Report, May 31, 1923). Within only two years, the City had established the tax-supported Colored Branch.

Nat Washer, one of San Antonio’s most influential White citizens was both a founding member of the War Recreation Board and president of the Library board. Washer worked with Mayor John Tobin to assure that the City of San Antonio would purchase the Community House. On September 11, 1925, Washer announced:

“...that the Mayor had purchased for the city the property of the colored community house for the purposes of using it as a library for colored citizens. The Mayor has appointed a colored woman as librarian to act under the supervision of the Carnegie Library, and has promised to add \$2,500 to the budget of the Carnegie Library for the support of the colored branch” (LM, September 11, 1925).

The City then purchased the property adjoining the community house that included a small cottage, and on November 2, 1925, the Colored Branch of the Carnegie Library opened at 226 North Hackberry (see figure 2). Byrd Holland was employed to catalogue books for the new branch. The shelves were stocked with 240 volumes from the old Community House library and another 600 books from the Carnegie and Douglass High School libraries. The library was open from 12-7 p.m. on week days and from 3-5 p.m. on Sundays. In the first seven months, 777 users registers and circulation reached 4,823 books (LM, October 19, 1925; November 12, 1925; Librarian’s Annual Report, 1925-26:15).

Within a year of opening, the Colored Branch was described as having “practically no room for growth” and circulation had grown to 7,919 books. The Librarian’s Annual Report stated, “It is not encouraging to say the least to be able to render so little service to the colored people of our city who need adequate library service badly” (Librarian’s Annual Report, 1926-27:14-15). Deficiencies were also noted in system’s two other branches— the Woodlawn Branch on the city’s north side and the South Side branch.

Maury Maverick, a member of the Library Board, who later served as San Antonio’s Mayor and a United States Congressman, joined a Citizens’ Committee in 1926 to recommend that \$500,000 to \$1 million be spent to establish a

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 15

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

---

“sufficient and adequate library system” (San Antonio *Express*, October 9, 1926). Maverick complained that no bond funds had been spent on libraries. Not only were the branches deficient, but the main Carnegie Library had outgrown its building in spite of a Carnegie-funded addition.

By the mid-1920s, Charles Bellinger had succeeded John A. Grumbles as the political leader of San Antonio’s east side community. Bellinger was able to organize votes for White public officials in exchange for public improvements and jobs to benefit the African American community. One of Bellinger’s interests was the Community House and Library, and in 1926, he organized the Negro Citizens Executive Committee to improve the facility. The following year, Bellinger helped elect C.M. Chambers as San Antonio’s mayor, and when a bond package was presented to voters on May 19, 1928, it included \$85,000 to build a new Colored Branch Library and Auditorium (Mason, 68-69; Librarian’s Annual Report, 1928-29). Bellinger’s work had apparently been rewarded.

The project was not without controversy. Shortly after the election, Library Board members complained that politicians had developed the bond package without seeking the board’s approval. Notwithstanding the fact that the main Carnegie Library had been expanded to include an auditorium, board members now argued that the new branches should be solely for library use. Though they questioned the entire package, discussions about the Colored branch became particularly acrimonious. Board members argued that the library occupied only 1/10 of the building’s total square footage, and intimated that use of bonds to finance the auditorium was illegal (LM, February 8 & 15, 1929).

These arguments, fraught with the segregationist tone of the day, were widely covered in the local press, which was accused of misquoting both the Mayor and Library board. As the rhetoric escalated, Mayor Chambers asked the library board to either accept the funds or “permit the colored people to use the Main Library.”

“...as to the colored library, it is my candid opinion that the branch library for them is also their main and only library, and that as a matter of justice it should be built. As to using the library fund for an auditorium...it is all one building, and is so arranged that it can be used as a large reading room, and if necessary, partitioned as needed.”

It is unclear how this disagreement was resolved, but in the end, Mayor Chambers prevailed and the Colored Library and Auditorium building was constructed as planned.

## The Architects

Carl Von Seutter and Malcolm Simons were appointed architects for the Colored Library and Auditorium in January 1929. Carl Von Seutter had practiced architecture since the early 1890s. He worked as a draftsman for James Riely Gordon from 1894 to 1896, and joined James Murphy in practice from 1897 to 1898 (San Antonio City Directories, various years). After practicing alone, Von Seutter entered into partnership with Malcolm G. Simons in the middle 1920s. During his early period, Von Seutter is best known for his design of the imposing Otto Koehler house in Laurel Heights in 1900 (George: *Architecture as Art in San Antonio*).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Section 8 Page 16

---

Seutter and Simons were selected in 1924 to be the architects for the new Temple Beth El, just across Belknap Street from the Koehler House. Malcolm Simons was an active member of Temple Bethel, and library board president, Nat Washer, was president of the Temple. It is not known if Simons' friendship with Nat Washer influenced his selection as architect for the Colored Branch Library and Auditorium. Other known work by Seutter and Simons includes the Clower Building (1910; demolished) and the Alamo Heights Presbyterian Church (1928; standing). Carl Von Seutter later retired and died in San Antonio on December 19, 1937 (*San Antonio Light*, December 20, 1937). Nothing more is known about Malcolm Simons at this time.

## The Carver: 1930-1972

While the new building was being constructed, the Colored library operated from its temporary location at 310 North Hackberry. It was reported that the old community house structure would be moved to Lincoln Park on North Hackberry Street. This may be an error as Lincoln Park was not located on Hackberry Street. It is possible that the building was moved to Central Playground--later named Fairchild Park--a segregated facility only two blocks to the east. A barracks-style building stood at this location and served as a recreation center for many years (See figure 1).

The library and auditorium building, constructed by Mitchell Construction Company at a cost of \$67,749, opened to the public on Saturday, August 9, 1930 (CCM, I:356). No detailed accounts of the event have been located (*San Antonio Express*, August 5, 1930:20; August 9, 1930:20). The event was not covered in the White press or mentioned in Library Board minutes, and no copies of San Antonio's African American newspaper of that time, the *Inquirer*, are known to survive.

## The Auditorium

Library Board members had argued unsuccessfully against using bond funds to construct an auditorium in conjunction with the new Colored library. Though they correctly observed that the auditorium dominated the library in size, the facility that they disavowed gave the Carver its legendary reputation. As San Antonio's only publicly owned, segregated auditorium, the Library Auditorium, as it was called, was in constant use. It was the venue for virtually all major events in the African American community for over 25 years. The City's defunct African American newspaper, the *Inquirer*, was succeeded by the *San Antonio Register* which began publication in 1931. The *Register* documents the auditorium's ongoing use for events including school graduations, dances, concerts, theatrical performances, and political speeches.

While San Antonio had a wide array of segregated nightclubs, and the town's major theaters had "Colored balconies," the Library Auditorium played host to the most prominent African American entertainers of the pre and post World War II era. While some came to San Antonio to appear only at the Library Auditorium, major entertainers often performed at larger, downtown venues before playing a late concert on the east side (see figures 3-8). Though a complete list of these notables remains to be compiled, they include (with dates of appearance):

- Earl "Fatha" Hines (August 1932)
- Count Basie (April 1938)
- Duke Ellington with singer Ivie Anderson (October 1938)
- Jimmy Lunceford (February 1942)
- Tiny Bradshaw and Lil Green (July 1942)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 17

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

---

- Andy Kirk (March 1945)
- Louis “Satchmo” Armstrong (December 1942; July 1945)
- Billy Eckstine with Sara Vaughn (July 1945)
- Smith Jubilee Singers (July 1945)
- T-Bone Walker with Ray Charles (October 1954)

The Library Auditorium also hosted the best-known secular and religious speakers of the day. Illinois Congressman Oscar De Priest, a strong activist for racial justice, spoke at the auditorium in August 1931, and Methodist Episcopal Church leaders, Dr. W.B. Crittenden of New York and Bishop R.E. Jones of New Orleans appeared at the auditorium. Langston Hughes spoke at the Library Auditorium in April 1945. Various sources state that Paul Robeson, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Adam Clayton Powell, among other well-know African Americans, also appeared at the Library Auditorium. Research is ongoing to verify these accounts.

While these celebrities gave the auditorium a legendary reputation that looms large in community memory, day-to-day events were equally important to the facility’s place in local history. St. Philip’s College, the city’s historically African American community college, held its graduation services here for many years, as did local high schools. Homemakers came here to test their skills in baking contests. Fledgling actors, actresses, singers and dancers participated in productions of local groups including the Negro Little Theater, Hemmings Dramatic Players, Mattie Lewis Terpsichorean Club, and Virgie Jackson Players and Dancers. Sororities and fraternities held dances and assemblies at the auditorium. One writer recalled:

“... the Library Auditorium is a legacy to the Blacks of San Antonio, and it is best remembered by the many social clubs whose members engaged in the revelry of fine adornment in dress, spectacular balls and dances”  
*(Preliminary Historical Facts of the George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium).*

Use of the auditorium apparently declined in the 1950s and 1960s as desegregation opened newer, more modern educational and entertainment venues to San Antonio’s African American population. The exact date of the auditorium’s closing has not been determined, but the entire building was shuttered when the library moved to a new location in 1973.

## The Library

While African American social life revolved around the auditorium, the adjoining library was the center of learning. Under the direction of Prudence Curry, the library was popular and well-used from its opening day. Curry succeeded San Antonio’s first African American librarian, Byrd Holland, as director of the Colored branch in 1929, and with the exception of a brief period, she remained in that position until her retirement in 1958 (San Antonio *Express*, February 24, 1958).

Like other early branch libraries in San Antonio, the facility was not given a proper name, and was called simply, “the Colored Library” for several years. In February 1938, Prudence Curry wrote to the Library Board asking that the library be named. The board offered Mrs. Curry two options-- Paul Lawrence Dunbar and George Washington Carver (LM, February 11, 1938). Board minutes contain no further discussion, and it is unclear how the decision was made, but the name, “George Washington Carver Branch,” was being used in Board minutes by 1939 (LM, September 16, 1939).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 18

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

---

San Antonio had been only the second city in Texas to provide library services to African Americans when it opened a branch in Riverside School in 1903. (Fort Worth had done so in 1901.) Still, San Antonio's early effort was not sustained, and by the time the City of San Antonio purchased the Community House and opened a branch library there in 1925, Galveston and Houston were also providing service to African Americans.

A 1935 report by the Texas Library Association published in conjunction with the Texas Centennial summarized the history of library services for the state's African American population. In addition to San Antonio, the following city's provided facilities:

- Fort Worth 1901
- Galveston 1905
- Houston 1912
- Dallas 1931
- Port Arthur 1931
- Wichita Falls 1934

Other cities including Abilene, Corsicana, Eastland and Waco also provided some service to African Americans. The Association estimated that Texas' "total urban Negro population" in 1936 was 329,829, approximately 212,500 of whom had access to library services. Additional small school libraries were stocked by the Rosenwald fund. Taking into consideration the rural population, Prairie View College librarian, O.J. Baker, in a 1933 speech to the Texas Library Association, estimated that "73% of the total Negro population of Texas (is) without public service, as against 53% of the white population lacking these privileges" (Texas Library Association 1935).

The 1935 report estimated San Antonio's Negro population to be 17,978, and described the Colored library as "well equipped and the children's department charming. The librarian has had some training."

The Carver branch remained an integral part of the library system for over thirty years. Though its facility was small, circulation figures indicate that it was well used, and the library was doubled in size with the addition in 1949-50 of two projecting bays. Library minutes indicate that architect Leo M.J. Dielmann, a member of the Library Board, designed the addition and supervised its construction (LM, February 10, 1949). The cost of the addition was \$26,644 (LM, October 13, 1949).

The neighborhood surrounding the library remained stable and largely middle class throughout the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Though considered primarily an "African American" neighborhood, older White residents continued to live in parts of the area. Mirroring the nationwide trend of inner city neighborhoods, the area began to deteriorate in the post-World War II era as older residents died or moved to new suburbs. Desegregation compounded this trend. Today, the neighborhood is ethnically mixed and much of the remaining housing stock is deteriorated.

After 1950, the City did not spend money to update the Carver facility, and by the 1960s, it was the only library of eight branches that did not have central heating and air conditioning. Board minutes indicate that the branch remained active, but references to ongoing vandalism point to the neighborhood's decline. By the middle 1960s, African American

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 19

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

---

community leader, Valmo Bellinger, had been appointed to the Library Board, and by 1969, he was chairman of the Buildings and Properties Committee. Like his father, Charles Bellinger, he was a strong advocate for San Antonio's African American residents, and in his role on the Library Board, was likely influential in the move to construct a new facility.

Second Baptist Church donated a building site at 3350 East Commerce Street adjacent to its sanctuary for a new library. The George Washington Carver branch library, designed by the architectural firm of Haywood, Jordan, McGowan Associates, opened on March 4, 1973 (San Antonio Public Library press release, January 21, 1995).

### **The Carver: 1973-2003**

The library's move to its new facility left the Carver building vacant, and it was used briefly for storage by City departments (San Antonio *Light*, March 23, 1975). In 1973, residents became aware that the City intended to demolish the structure. Alarmed citizens led by Norva Hill, director of United Citizens Project Planning and Operating Corporation (UCPPOC), a local poverty agency, negotiated to save the structure. The City subsequently designated the building a Bicentennial project and committed \$339,000 in revenue sharing funds for its renovation. Haywood, Jordan, McGowan Associates, the firm that designed the new Carver library, served as project architect. The renovated facility was named the George Washington Carver Community Cultural Center.

In its new incarnation, the Carver remained remarkably true to its original purpose. Summarizing its goals, the Carver Center Committee stated:

“Our hope is to make the Carver a thriving center of all kinds of events—artistic, cultural, recreational, social; large and small; formal and informal; structured and spontaneous.”

The Carver was to be “a multiethnic and multicultural performing and visual arts center with a primary focus on the artistic achievements of African Americans” (McGowan to Planning Conference Participants, March 31, 1975; *Carver Community Cultural Center History*). Just as the auditorium had been from its inception, it would be used for artistic performances, educational outreach, and as an affordable rental facility for community organizations.

The Carver Community Cultural Center was dedicated on January 30, 1977, and inaugurated with a two-week celebration that culminated with the Raymond Johnson Dance Company of New York (San Antonio *Express*, January 31, 1977). In subsequent years, the Carver hosted performances by such diverse artists and groups as Merce Cunningham, Mummenschanz, Jose Greco and the Trinidad Folk Festival (San Antonio *Express-News*, February 21, 1982). The Carver Jazz Festival became a popular annual event.

As the Carver prepared to celebrate its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a well-established community facility, further improvements were needed to make it a competitive cultural venue. Community Development Block Grant funds totaling \$1.6 million were allocated to improve the stage, dressing rooms, seating, sound system, and air conditioning. A 12,000 square foot addition was made to house production facilities, and the auditorium was reconfigured with a raked floor and seating for 681 (San Antonio *Light*, February 20, 1986; San Antonio *Express-News*, August 2, 1987). Haywood, Jordan, McGowan Associates again served as project architect.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 20

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

---

The Carver Development Foundation Board was organized in 1987 to secure ongoing funding for programming and capital improvements (San Antonio *Express-News*, May 11, 1987). Funds were raised to purchase adjacent land including the old Porter Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal (C.M.E.) Church located southeast of the Carver. The "Little Carver," as the Porter Memorial Chapel is generally called, was renovated as a 10,000 square foot, flexible performance and meeting space. This project was completed and dedicated in November 2002. The Little Carver is also used for programming by the Carver Academy, a private school located in a new structure south of the Carver Community Cultural Center. The Carver Academy, founded by San Antonio Spurs basketball player, David Robinson, and his wife, Valerie, opened in 2001.

The Carver Community Cultural Center was closed in 2000 for extensive repairs and modeling, but the \$3.6 million project was delayed until 2002 when adequate funding was in place. Work includes hazardous materials abatement, structural, mechanical and roof repairs, improvements related to ADA and health safety compliance, and repair and painting of interior and exterior features. The Carver's artistic season has continued off-site, but will return to the theater when construction is completed in early 2004.

The George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium is significant under Criterion A (local level) in the areas of Black Heritage and Performing Arts as a gathering place for San Antonio's African American community during the period of segregation, and a facility that remains a community meeting place and venue for multi-ethnic programming. The building is also significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a good example of an Art Deco public building that retains its integrity in spite of remodeling and additions. The period of significance extends from 1929, the year construction began on the library and auditorium until 1954, the year that the Supreme Court declared segregation unconstitutional and the City of San Antonio integrated its public facilities. The Texas Historical Commission issued a preliminary statement of National Register eligibility for the Carver in 2002 (Brinkman to Pease, March 28, 2002).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 21

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

---

## MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Bexar County Deed Records

Bobinski, George. *Carnegie Libraries: Their History and Impact on American Public Library Development*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1969.

Carnegie Corporation Correspondence, Reel 28.

*Carver Community Cultural Center History*. unpublished typescript.

City of San Antonio, City Clerk's Office. Deed File #6.

City of San Antonio, City Council Minutes.

Ford, Vera. Interview with Maria Watson Pfeiffer, April 19, 2003.

*History of the Carver*. Unpublished typescript.

Johns, E.B. *Camp Travis and Its Part in the World War*. New York: E.B. Johns, 1919.

Jones, Theodore. *Carnegie Libraries across America: A Public Legacy*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997.

Mason, Kenneth. *African Americans and Race Relations in San Antonio, Texas, 1867-1937*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999.

San Antonio City Directories, various years.

San Antonio *Express*, various issues.

San Antonio *Daily Express*, various issues.

San Antonio *Light*, various issues.

San Antonio *Register*, various issues.

San Antonio Public Library Board Minutes.

San Antonio Public Library, Librarian's Annual Reports, various years.

San Antonio Public Library, vertical files.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 22

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

---

San Antonio *Register*, 1931-1954, various issues.

State of Texas, Office of the Secretary of State. Charters for War Camp Community Service and Colored Library Association.

Texas State Library Association. *Handbook of Texas Libraries*. Austin: Texas State Library Association. Number 1, 1904; Number 3, 1915; Number 4, 1935.

*War Camp Community Service and the Negro Soldier*, n.p. [1920].

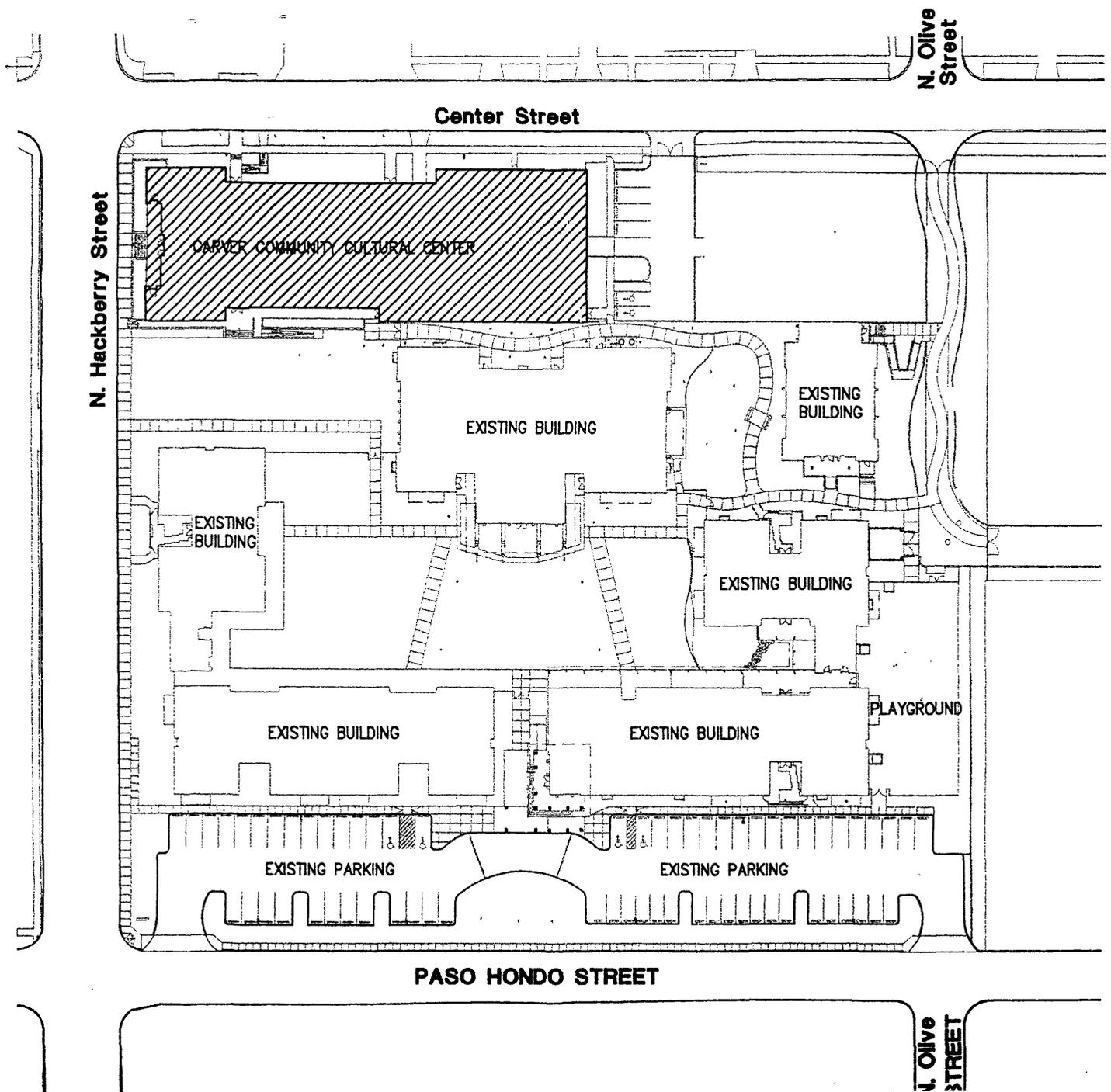
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Section FIGURE Page 23

Site Plan



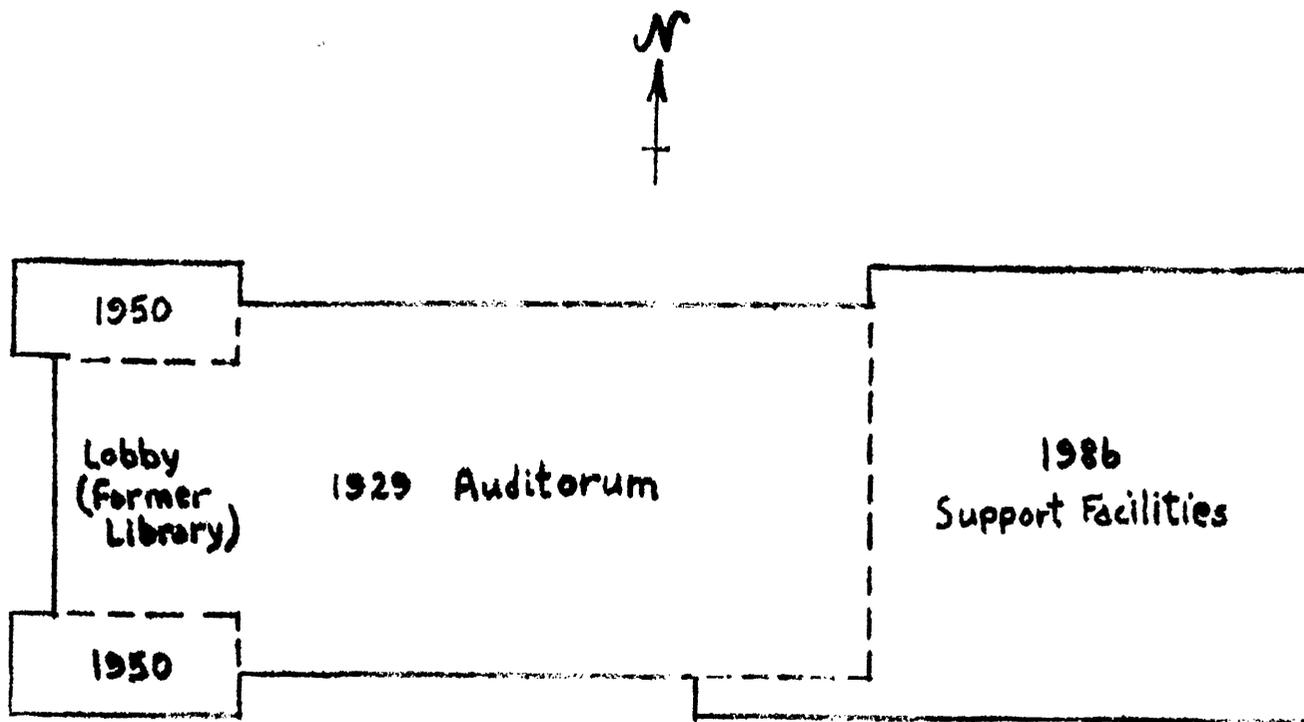
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 24

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Plan (not to scale)



**CARVER COMMUNITY CULTURAL CENTER  
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

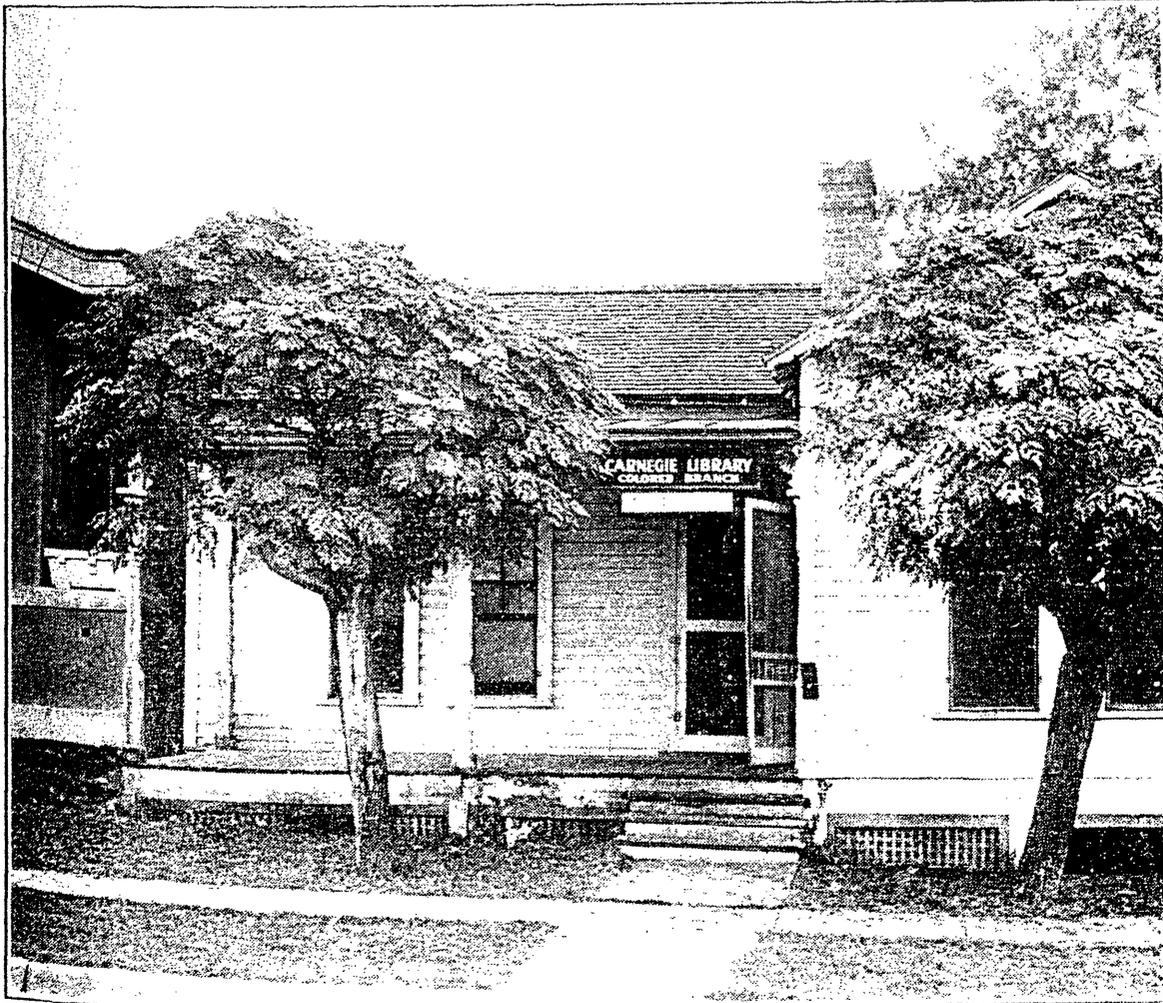
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 25

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Carnegie Library, Colored Branch, 1925-26



COLORED BRANCH

*Librarian's Annual Report*  
1925-26

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 26

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

*San Antonio Register*, advertisement for Earl Hines, August 26, 1932

*National Broadcasting Co.*  
PRESENTS  
**EARL HINES**  
(KING OF THE IVORIES)  
IN PERSON



— Also —  
— Genera —  
Washington  
Formez  
to-star with  
Ethel  
Waters  
In  
"Rhapsody  
in Black"

Sensational!  
Out-  
standing!  
12 Pieces 12  
Featuring  
all latest  
song and  
dancer hits.  
EVERY  
MAN AN  
ARTIST!

"FATHER" HINES

AND HIS  
*Grand Terrace Cafe Orchestra*  
AT  
LIBRARY AUDITORIUM  
WEDNESDAY NIGHT

Good Music!  
Plenty Pop!  
Lots Fun!

**AUG. 31st**

Plenty of  
Seats for  
Listeners

**75c Admission 75c**  
(INCLUDING FEDERAL TAX)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 27

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

*San Antonio Register*, advertisement for Duke Ellington, October 12, 1933

STARTS SATURDAY OCT. 14 **MAJESTIC 25<sup>c</sup>** ALL SEATS OPENING 'TIL CLOSING

---

**IN PERSON**  
*Harlem's Aristocrat of Jazz*

**DUKE ELLINGTON**

**AND HIS WORLD-FAMOUS BAND**

with

<b>IVIE ANDERSON</b> Original Minnie the Moocher	<b>WILLIE TUCKER</b> Original Snake-Hips Dancer
<b>BAILEY &amp; DARBY</b> Famous Tap Dance Team	<b>JESS CRYOR</b> Sensational Singer
	<b>SONNY GREER</b> Entertainer

**COMPANY OF 20**

---

**BIG COLORED DANCE!**  
**DUKE ELLINGTON**  
and His World-Famous Band

---

**Library Auditorium**  
Thursday, October 19---10 til?  
75c (Including Tax) Corner Hackberry and Center Sts.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 28

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

*San Antonio Register*, advertisement for T-Bone Walker, October 15, 1954

**Biggest Blues Show**  
of this season  
Don't Miss  
This One!  
**FIVE-STAR  
ATTRACTION**  
Library  
Auditorium  
Friday, Oct. 15



T-BONE WALKER

**T-BONE WALKER**  
and His Orchestra  
FAYE ADAMS - "Shake a Hand"  
MEMPHIS SLIM and His House Rockers  
**LOWELL FULSON**  
"Every Day I Have the Blues"  
RAY CHARLES - "Mess Around"  
ALL THIS FOR ONLY \$1.95 Presale  
Tickets on Sale  
Betty's Eat Shop - Life Saver Grill  
Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Jeffery, Sponsors

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 29

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

---

## PHOTO LOG

George Washington Carver Library and Auditorium

226 North Hackberry

San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Photography by Maria Watson Pfeiffer, June 2003, unless otherwise noted

Negatives held by Maria Watson Pfeiffer

1. West elevation (Hackberry Street) looking southeast
2. North elevation (Center Street) looking west
3. Cast stone signage, southwest entrance (appears over four original side doors)
4. Cast stone decoration (below windows along north and south elevations)
5. Cast stone decoration (1929 structure)
6. South elevation (old Gibbs Street right-of-way) looking northeast
7. Stair railing and tile flooring, entrance hallway
8. Ticket booth and tile wainscoting, entrance hallway
9. Painted ceiling medallion, entrance hallway
10. Library looking north
11. Library looking north, Spring 1950
12. Library looking south, Spring 1950
13. View looking northeast from Hackberry Street, Carver Academy in foreground







COLONIA

GRAND OF

19

THE SAN ANTONIO

29

LIGERUM AND AUTONUM







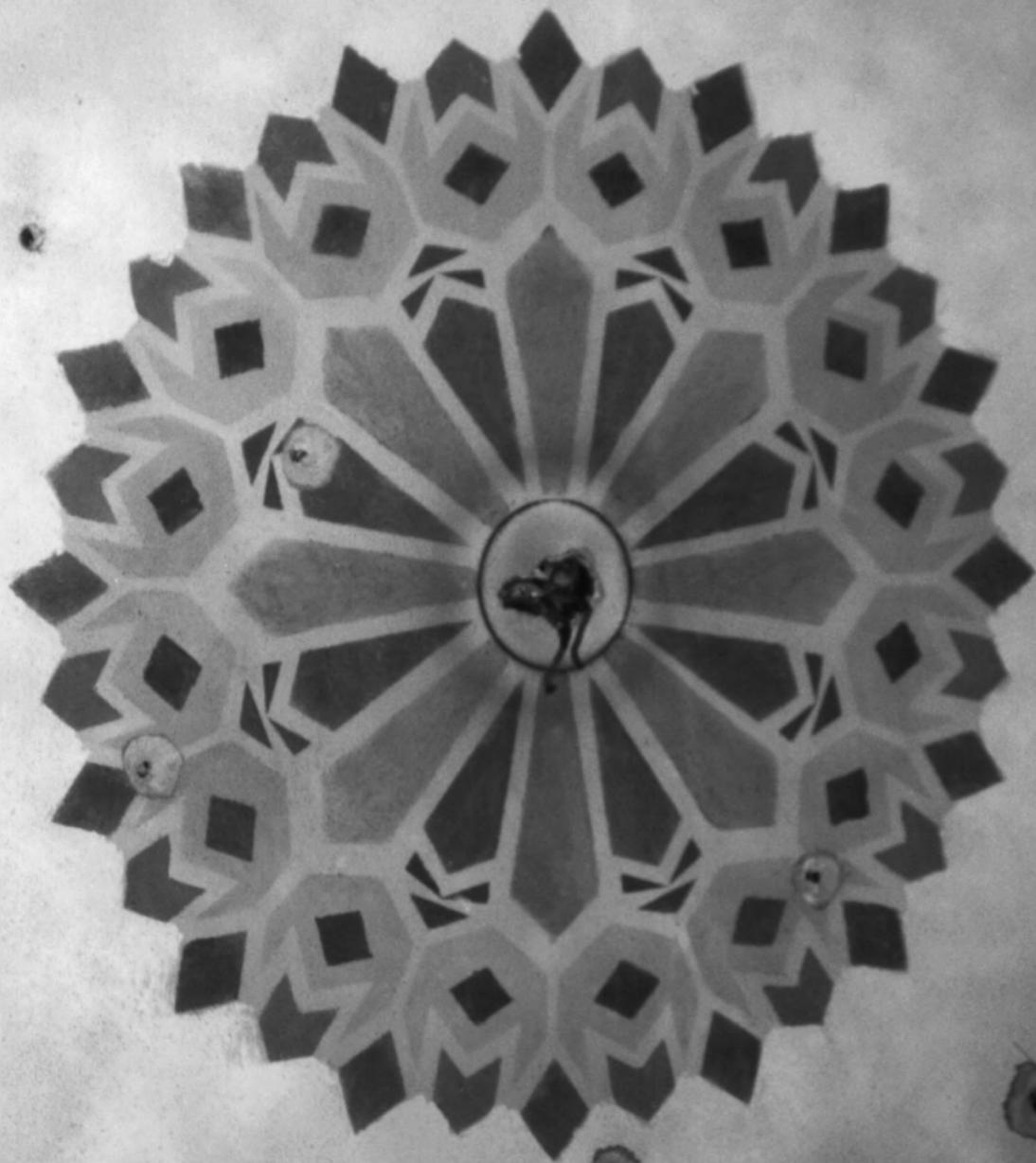
CITY OF SAN ANTONIO



**VAUGHN**  
CONSTRUCTION  
DELIVERIES  
→















SCHOOL  
SPEED  
LIMIT  
20  
7-24