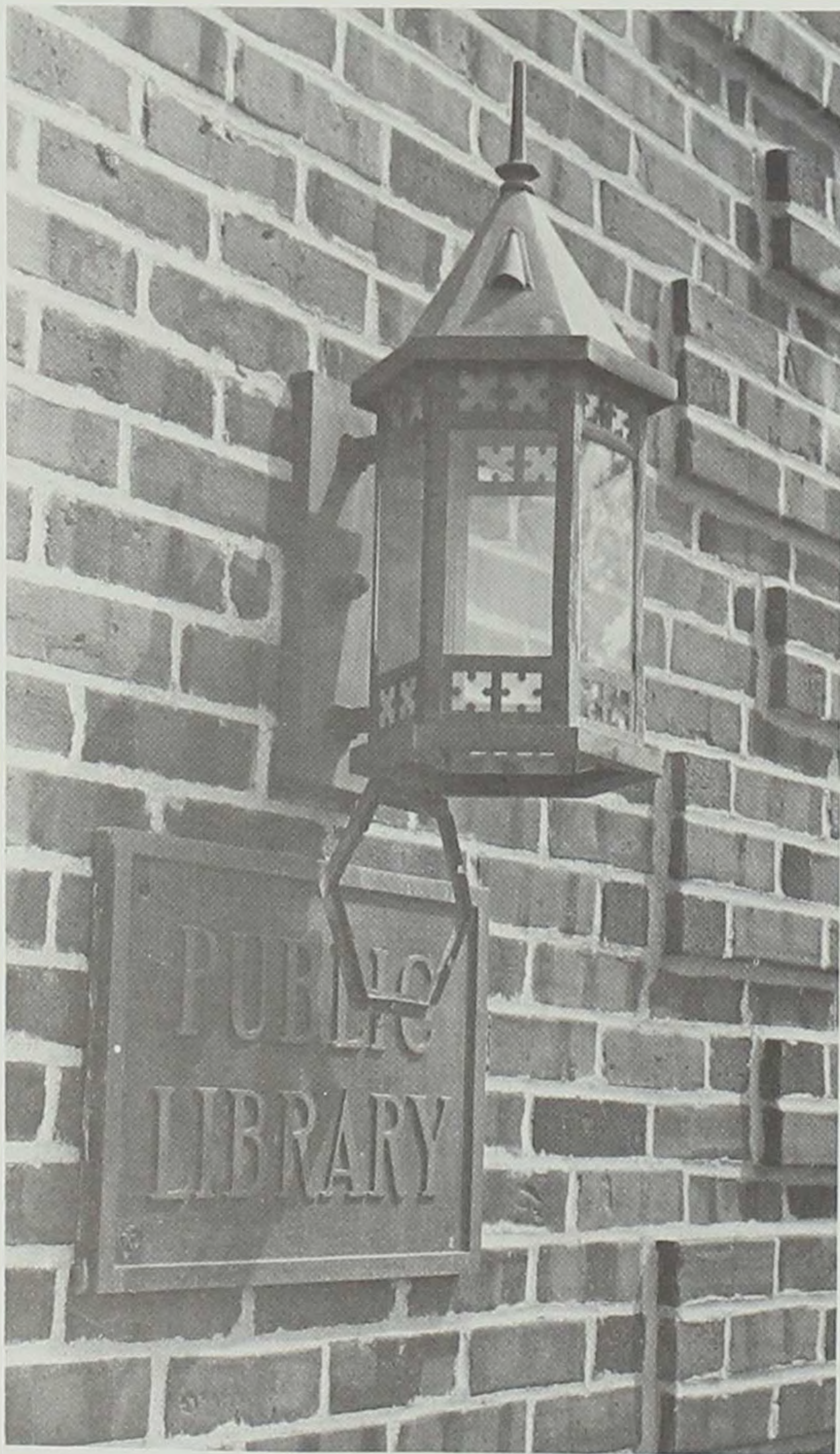


Patton and Miller: Designers of Carnegie Libraries

by Paul Kruty

The public library is an ancient institution, but when it came under the influence of the intense activity of the latter part of the nineteenth century, it received such an extraordinary expansion and such a revolution of methods as to make it almost a new creation.



Entryway lamp at the 1903 Vinton Public Library (photographed by Hans Muessig and Sarah Dennett for the ISHD, Historic Preservation)

Thus began architect Grant Miller in "Library Buildings," a paper presented before the Iowa Library Association at Grinnell in 1902. His Chicago architectural firm, Patton and Miller, had recently received the first of its numerous commissions for libraries in Iowa—and was establishing its reputation as one of the major designers of Carnegie libraries. By 1909 libraries designed by Patton and Miller dotted the state from Muscatine to Council Bluffs, and from Mason City to Chariton.

The driving force behind these "new creations" was Andrew Carnegie and his Carnegie Corporation of New York. Miller and his partner, Normand Patton, designed over one hundred of the 1679 Carnegie library buildings erected between 1886 and 1919. These prolific architects received their commissions mostly from Midwestern towns and colleges, but they occasionally designed libraries as far away as Cheyenne, Wyoming, and Lake Charles, Louisiana. A sixth of the nearly one hundred Carnegie libraries built in Iowa were designed by Patton and Miller.

The public library, supported by either state or local government, dates to the founding of the Boston Public Library in 1848. Within a quarter century most American cities had public libraries of some sort. The emergence of the professional librarian followed almost immedi-



The cover of Harper's Weekly for 30 March 1901 recognized Andrew Carnegie's role as a financier of public libraries.

ately. The American Library Association distributed the first issue of the *Library Journal* at the Centennial Exposition held in Philadelphia in 1876, while the first American library school was founded in 1884 by Melvil Dewey at Columbia University.

Andrew Carnegie witnessed this slow rise of

the public library as an institution. Early in his extraordinary life, Carnegie wrote of the obligation of the wealthy to use their surplus income to benefit fellow citizens (eventually he gave away ninety percent of his own wealth). Carnegie had definite ideas about how the money should be dispersed. In an essay titled

"The Best Fields for Philanthropy," he listed libraries as second only to universities among seven areas worthy of donation by the wealthy. True to his word, Carnegie eventually spent forty million dollars constructing library buildings in the United States.

After 1898, when the mechanics for receiving money were reorganized, a typical library grant would start with a local individual writing a letter to the Carnegie Corporation. James Bertram, Carnegie's personal secretary, would then explain the three conditions that had to be met before a grant was made: the town would have to supply the library site, the city council would have to pledge itself to an annual maintenance agreement (ten percent of the total amount of the Carnegie grant would have to be spent each year by the community to maintain the library), and, after 1908, a sketch plan of the proposed building indicating a workable library plan would have to be approved. All communication was done by mail and the correspondence about a particular building was often voluminous.

Almost half the Carnegie libraries were built in the Midwest. At the turn of the century many New England towns had either privately financed or state supported libraries, while vast areas of the West were not sufficiently settled to require libraries. Thus the Chicago architectural firm found itself swamped with orders for libraries. As Normand Patton wrote to the Washington, Indiana, library board in late 1901, "It so happens that just now we are called in so many directions at once to make visits of superintendence to various library buildings, that all the time of both members of the firm will be taken up the next week and it would be hardly possible for any one of us to visit Washington." Before the Carnegie money became readily available, commissions for libraries were so rare that, though Patton had only worked on six such buildings by 1900, he was one of the acknowledged experts in the field, and lectured on the subject before library

and architecture conventions alike. By 1901 Patton and Miller were often working on half a dozen libraries at the same time.

The earlier libraries most admired for their architectural beauty were designed by the great Boston architect Henry Hobson Richardson. Working in his own Romanesque Revival style, Richardson created round-arched, turreted buildings, constructed of heavy granite or sandstone and reminiscent of medieval buildings from before the Gothic period. His works were characterized by great simplicity and a harmony of parts.

During the 1880s and 1890s the Richardsonian Romanesque style was imitated by architects across the country. The libraries designed by Patton and his earlier partner, Reynolds Fisher, and the first of Patton and Miller's Iowa libraries displayed the influence of this style. The P.M. Musser Library at Muscatine, constructed in 1901, was a red sandstone structure built of large blocks with Romanesque arches and deep set windows. It was typical of the firm's earlier libraries, such as the Scoville Library at Carleton College (1897) or the Hackley Memorial Library in Muskegon, Michigan (1889).

By 1900, however, a change of architectural style had occurred which greatly affected the way Carnegie libraries would look. This was the rise, primarily after the Columbian Exposition of 1893, of the Classical Revival style—a style that would eventually supersede the Romanesque. The first major Classical Revival library was McKim, Mead, and White's Boston Public Library of 1887. It was followed by a large number of richly decorated, luxurious city libraries decorated in the classical manner—buildings with many columns and much ornament built of smooth gray limestone—including Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge's Chicago Public Library of 1892 and Carrère and Hastings' New York Public

Grant Clark Miller (1870-1956) was born in Rockford, Illinois. When he was thirteen his family moved to Mount Vernon, Iowa, so Grant and his brothers and sisters could attend Cornell Academy and College. After three years at Cornell (1887-1890), Grant went to the University of Illinois to study architecture under Nathan C. Ricker. He received his B.S. and M.S. degrees in architecture in 1894 and 1895, respectively. In 1898 he was awarded a B.S. in civil engineering from Cornell. By this time he had already joined the Chicago firm of Patton and Fisher to form Patton, Fisher and Miller.

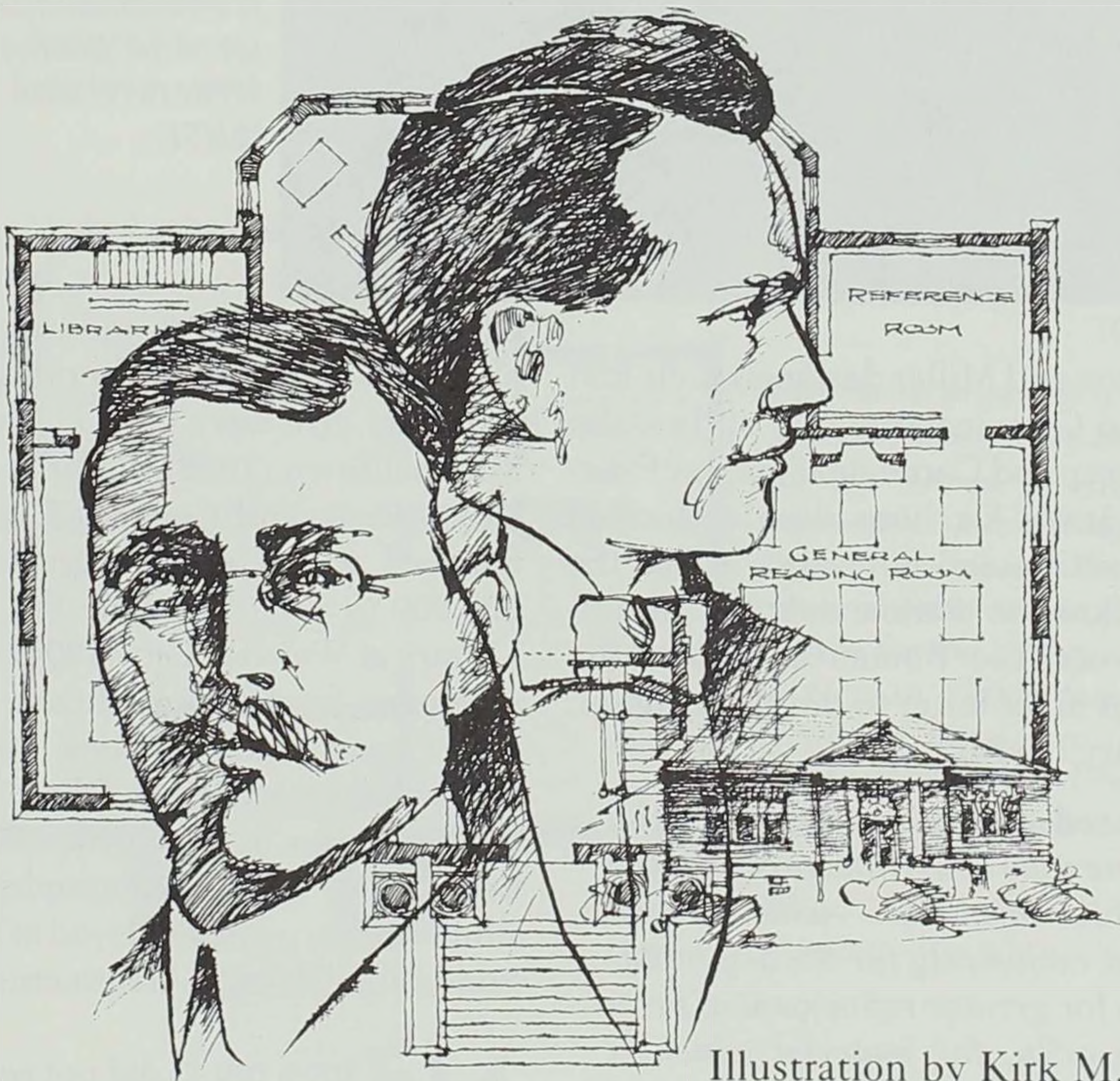
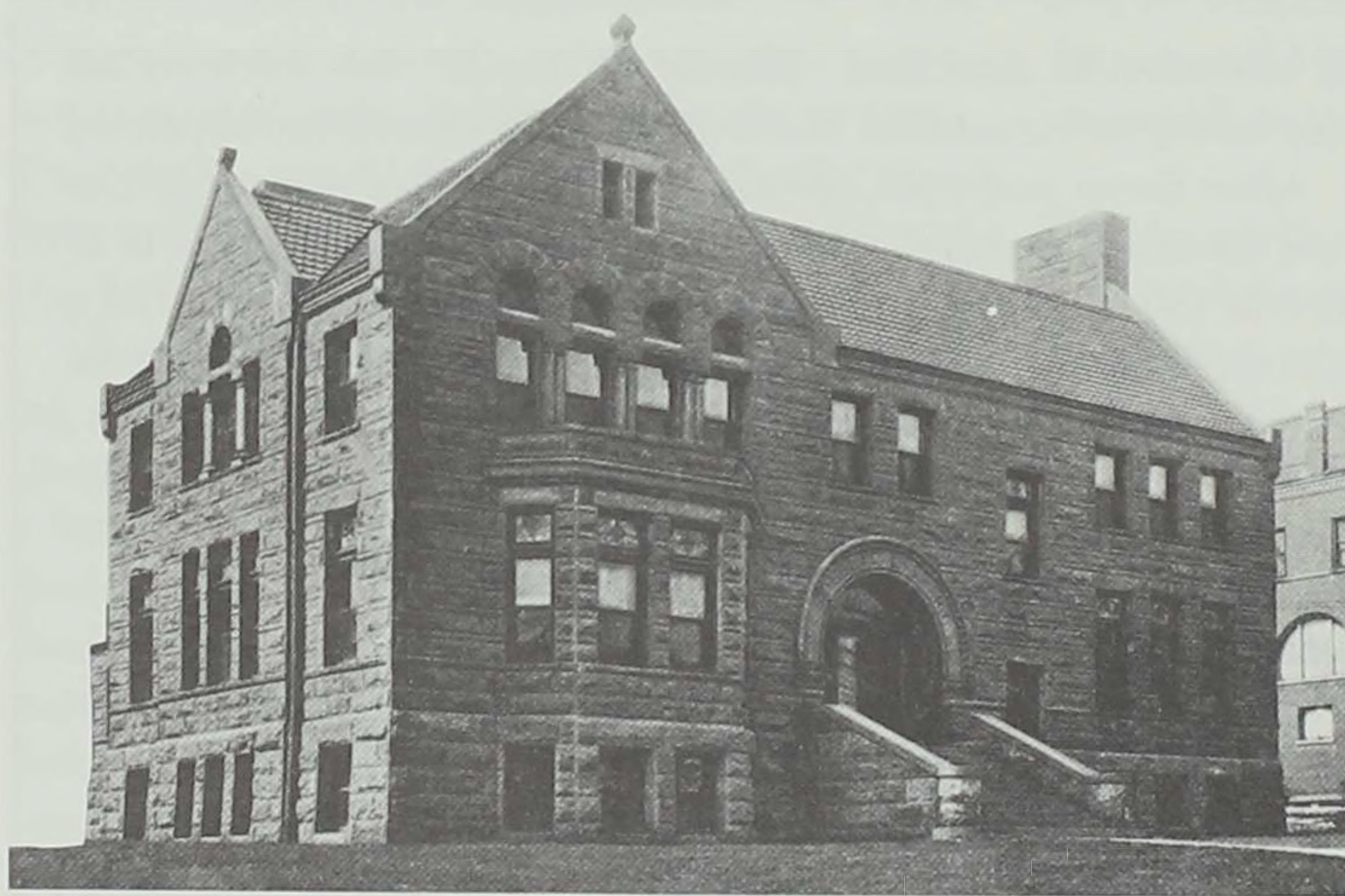


Illustration by Kirk M. Johnson

Normand Smith Patton (1852-1915), a native of Hartford, Connecticut, was educated at Amherst College and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and lived most of his adult life in Oak Park, Illinois. In 1885 he formed a highly successful partnership with Reynolds Fisher. The firm specialized in college buildings and campus plans and designed the Old Main at Buena Vista College (Storm Lake, Iowa) and buildings at Carleton College (Northfield, Minnesota) and Beloit College (Beloit, Wisconsin). When Patton was appointed architect for the Chicago Board of Education, Miller, almost twenty years Patton's junior, was brought into the firm. Fisher departed for the East in 1901. From then until 1912, when the two men separated and formed new partnerships, Patton and Miller, architects, designed over 300 buildings. One-third of these buildings were libraries.



Muscatine's P.M. Musser Library, constructed in 1901, was the first Patton and Miller-designed library in Iowa. It was one of the few Patton and Miller Iowa libraries to be financed privately. The structure was razed in 1974. (SHSI)

Library of 1897.

In 1901 Patton and Miller designed their first library in the Classical Revival style—the Renaissance-inspired Carnegie library at Freeport, Illinois. It was for these libraries derived from the major Classical Revival style that the firm became known. Patton defined the difference between the Romanesque and the Classical styles in his letter to the Washington, Indiana, library board:

Rock faced stone is used with the Romanesque style of architecture, but the classic architectural style—which is now used almost exclusively for library buildings—calls for greater refinement of form and, necessarily, for material which is worked into definite architectural shape, and not left with a rough, broken face.

And Miller explained to the Iowa Library Commission:

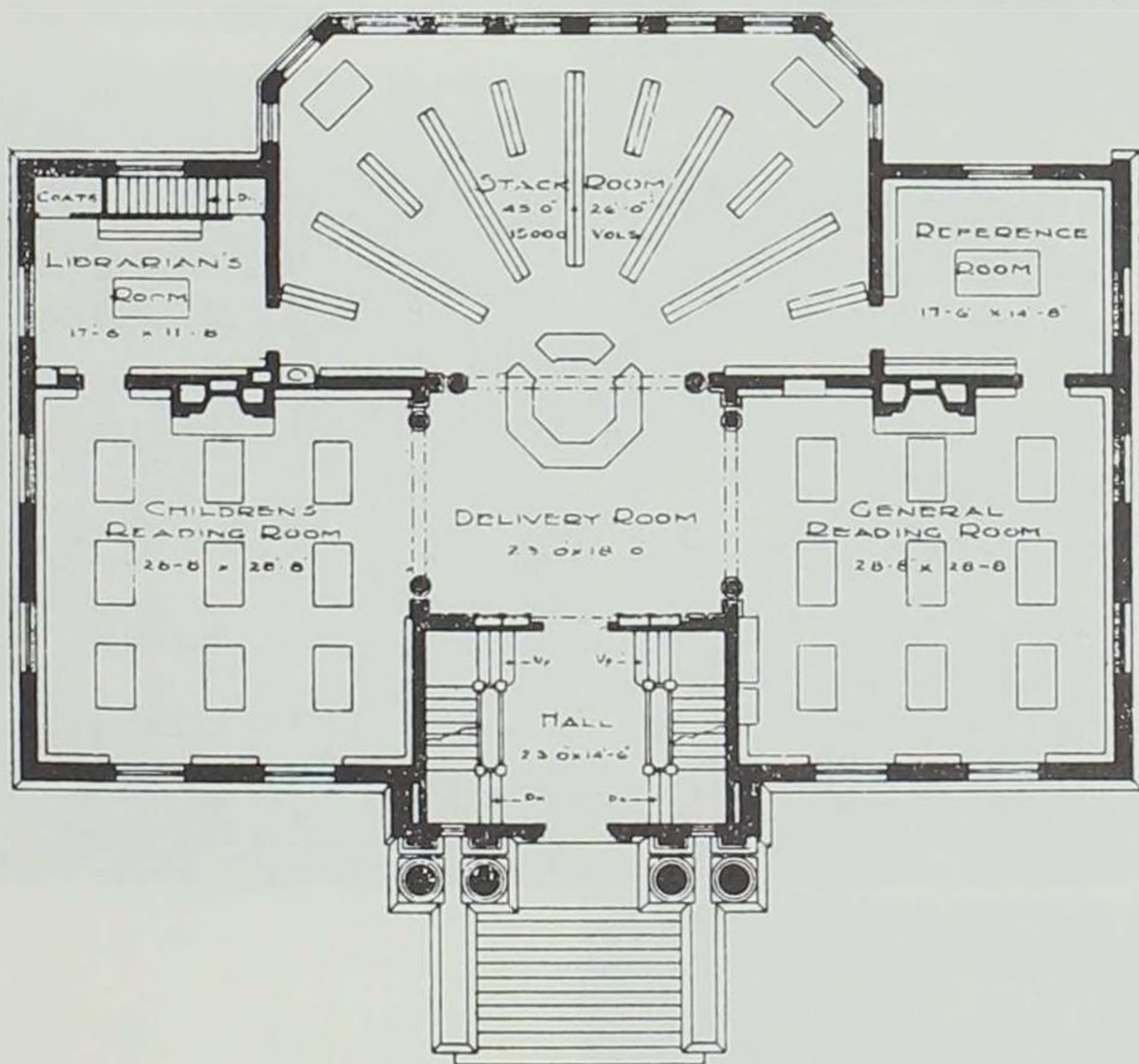
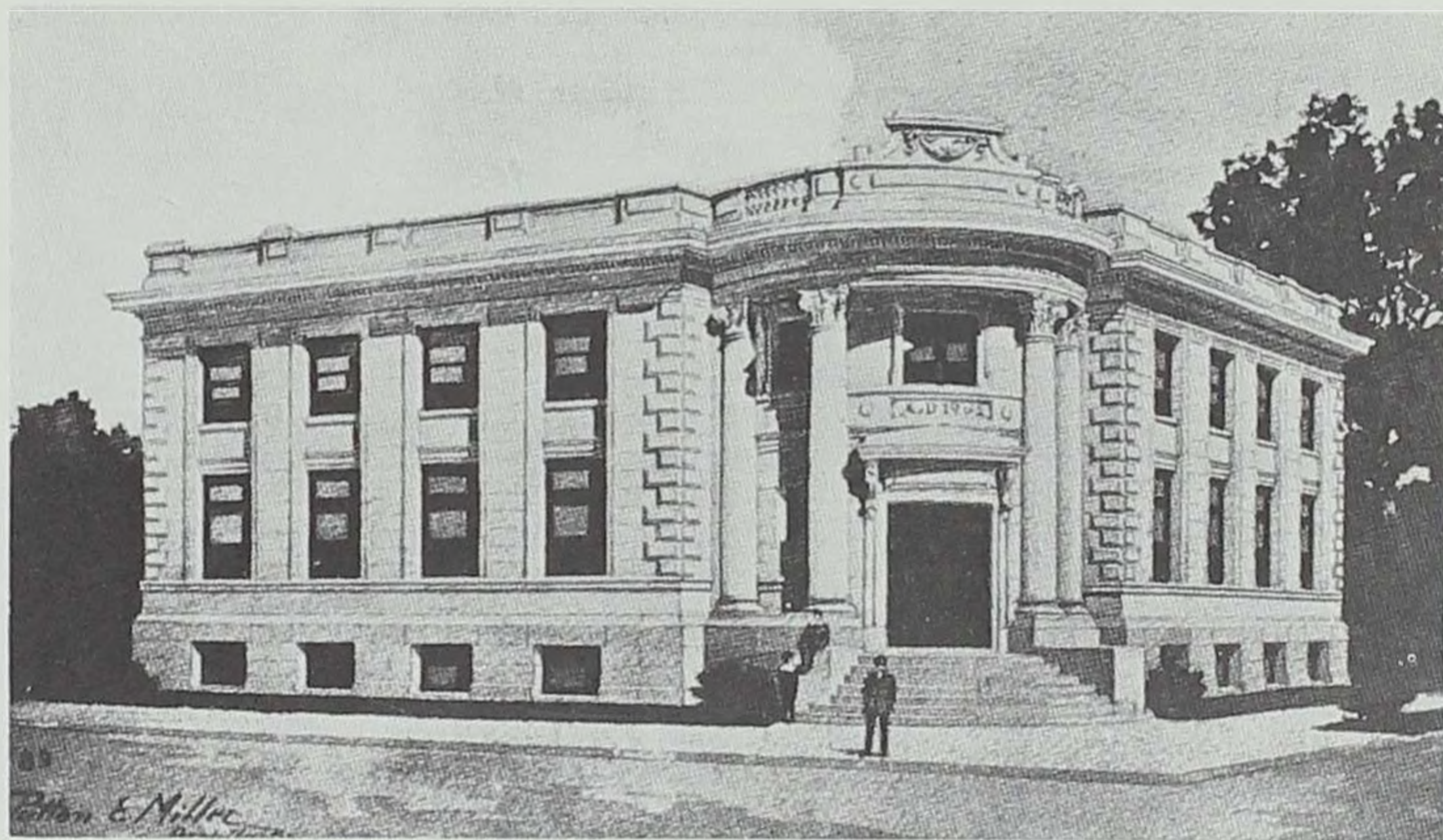
The revival of classic architecture is bringing with it an appreciation of the refinement that characterizes such work, and a desire that our libraries shall be built of enduring materials, and shall be nobly and fitly designed, even though simplicity is enforced by financial considerations.

Of the several dozen monumental Classical libraries Patton and Miller designed in the next few years, five were built in Iowa. Libraries at Marshalltown (1902), Clinton (1902), Mason City (1903), and Council Bluffs (1904) were financed with Carnegie grants ranging from \$20,000 to \$70,000, while the Kendall Young Library at Webster City (1904) was financed by a bequest from a local citizen. The architects took special pride in these buildings. Patton and Miller included the Clinton and Marshalltown libraries in a collection of views of their finest work, while photographs of the Council Bluffs library were displayed at the 1904 exhibition of the Chicago Architectural Club.

Most Iowa towns did not require a \$50,000 library building with a concomitant \$5,000 yearly financial burden for library maintenance, however. Indeed, library critic Chalmers Hadley distinguished between two types of libraries in an address to the American Library Association:

Our largest library structures continue to follow the Greek type and so secure the compactness and monumental impressiveness which it affords, but there has been a notable departure from this type in our smaller libraries in favor of a style

Completed in 1903, the Marshalltown Public Library was proclaimed a "model of convenience and beauty." The first floor contained a "reading room, children's room, study, librarian's room, stack and delivery room, and rotunda," while the second floor included a large lecture room, trustees room, lavatory, and museum.



Efforts to organize a library in Mason City began in 1875, when a library seemed to offer a viable means of counteracting the "influence of the open saloons." After several false starts, temporary homes for the library, and finally a fire in 1900, funding was arranged for a new, large, and centrally-located library. The building was completed in 1904.

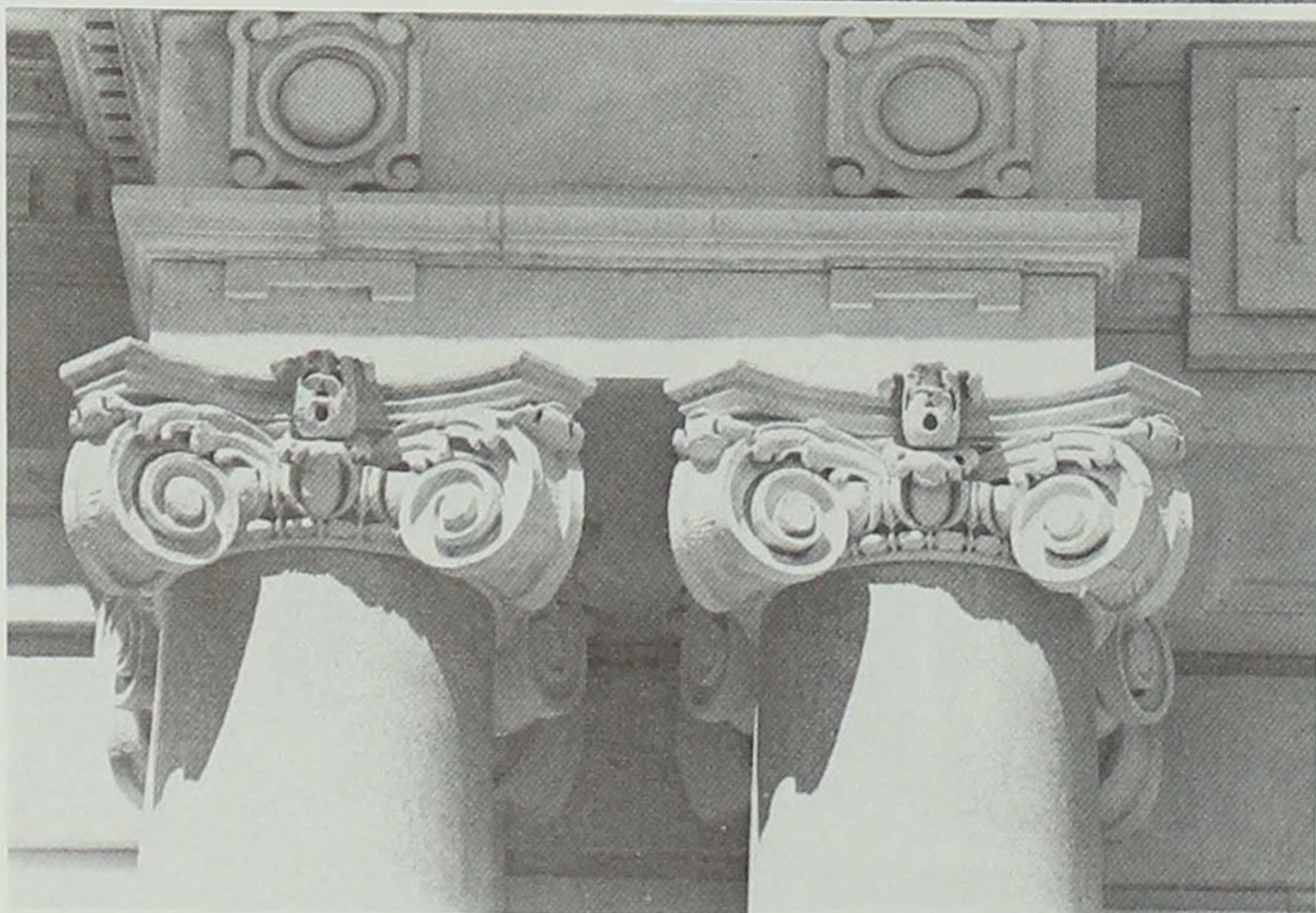
Funding was arranged for the monumental Clinton Public Library in 1902. This was Clinton's first public library. It was one of only five Classical style Iowa libraries designed by Patton and Miller, and they considered it one of their finest works.





The Iowa Library Commission characterized the Kendall Young Library as "substantial and dignified in exterior appearance," as these detail shots of the front of the building show (top and bottom photographs). The rich relief decoration in the keystone arch over the front door, the pedimented portico, the balustrade-topped cornice, the modillion, and the garland combine for an impressive effect. (photographed by Sarah Dennett for the ISHD, Historic Preservation)

An 1894 bequest by Kendall Young, longtime resident of Webster City, provided for the building of a fireproof public library. This elaborate Classical style library was completed and dedicated in 1905. At the time of its completion, the Kendall Young Library was the only privately endowed library in the state. The income accruing from Young's \$200,000 endowment was devoted to expanding the library's collections and to maintaining the building.



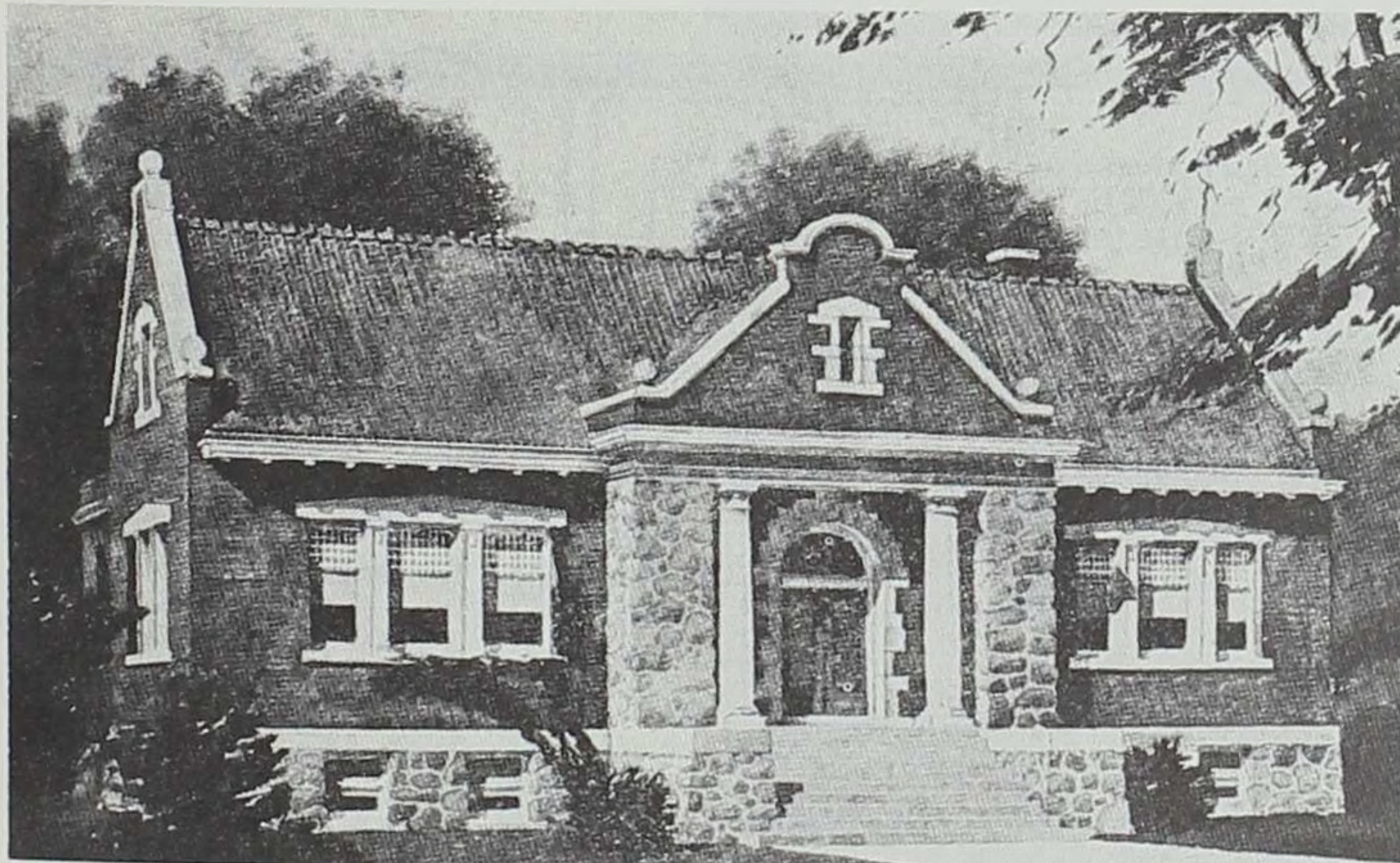
Foliated Ionic capitals top the coupled columns of the Kendall Young Library entryway. (photographed by Sarah Dennett for the ISHD, Historic Preservation)

less expensive than the Greek, less institutional and less formal in appearance, and more flexible in design.

Between 1902 and 1904 Patton and Miller received ten commissions for libraries whose Carnegie grants ranged from \$7,500 to \$12,500. Their designs for these libraries were, accordingly, less monumental and formal. These ten buildings were one-story brick structures, almost invariably set on rusticated stone basements. The libraries at Vinton, Chariton, Monticello, Charles City, Shenandoah, and Spencer, while still symmetrically balanced, seemed much more relaxed than their formal

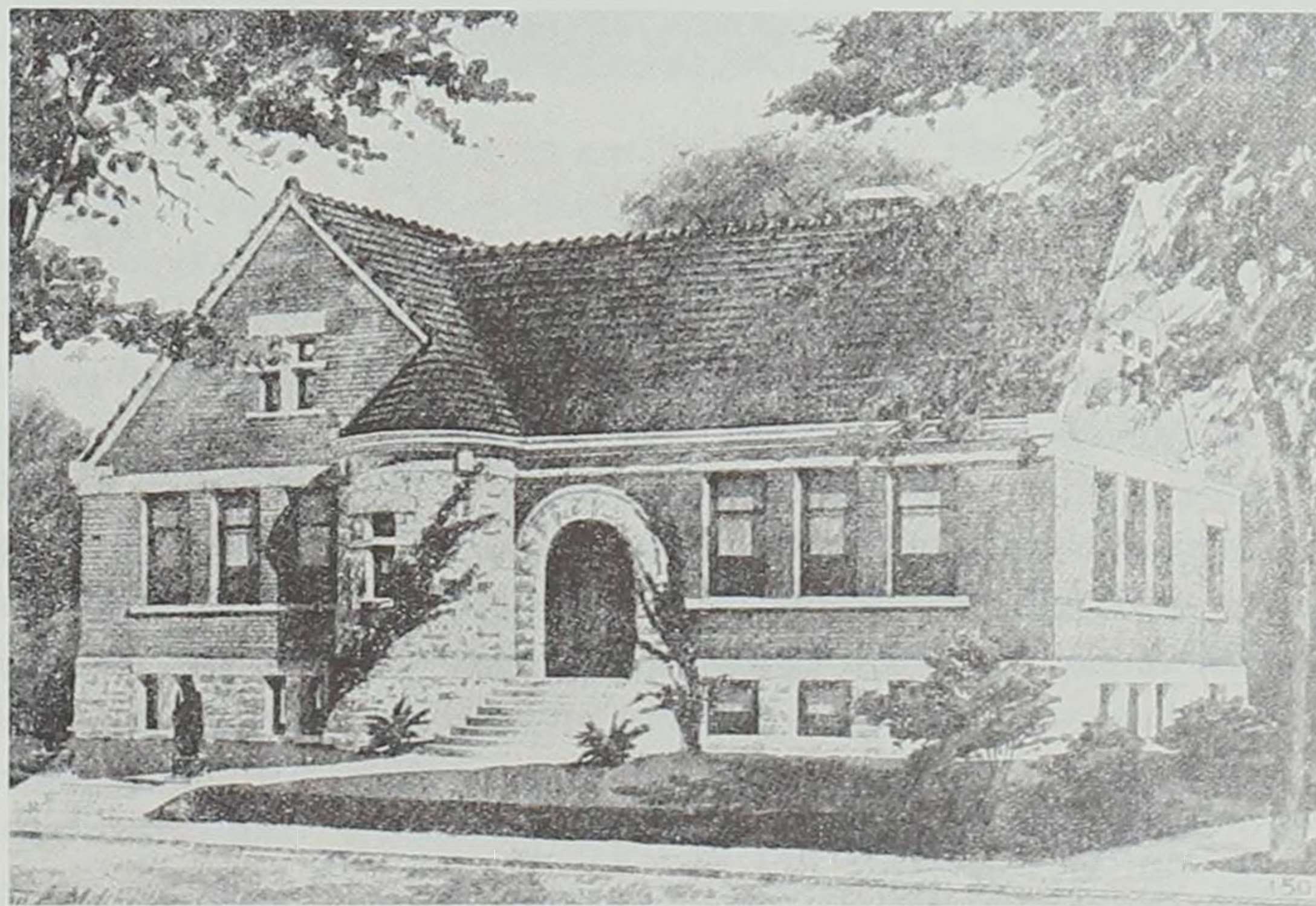
Classical counterparts. The four buildings at Eldora, Marengo, Mount Pleasant, and Algona were made even less formal by the asymmetrical placement of their entrances. The best of these buildings, such as the library at Charles City, had a romantic character that seemed little related to the historic style of the particular building—styles the architects rather loosely termed Norman, Gothic, Jacobean, or Flemish Renaissance.

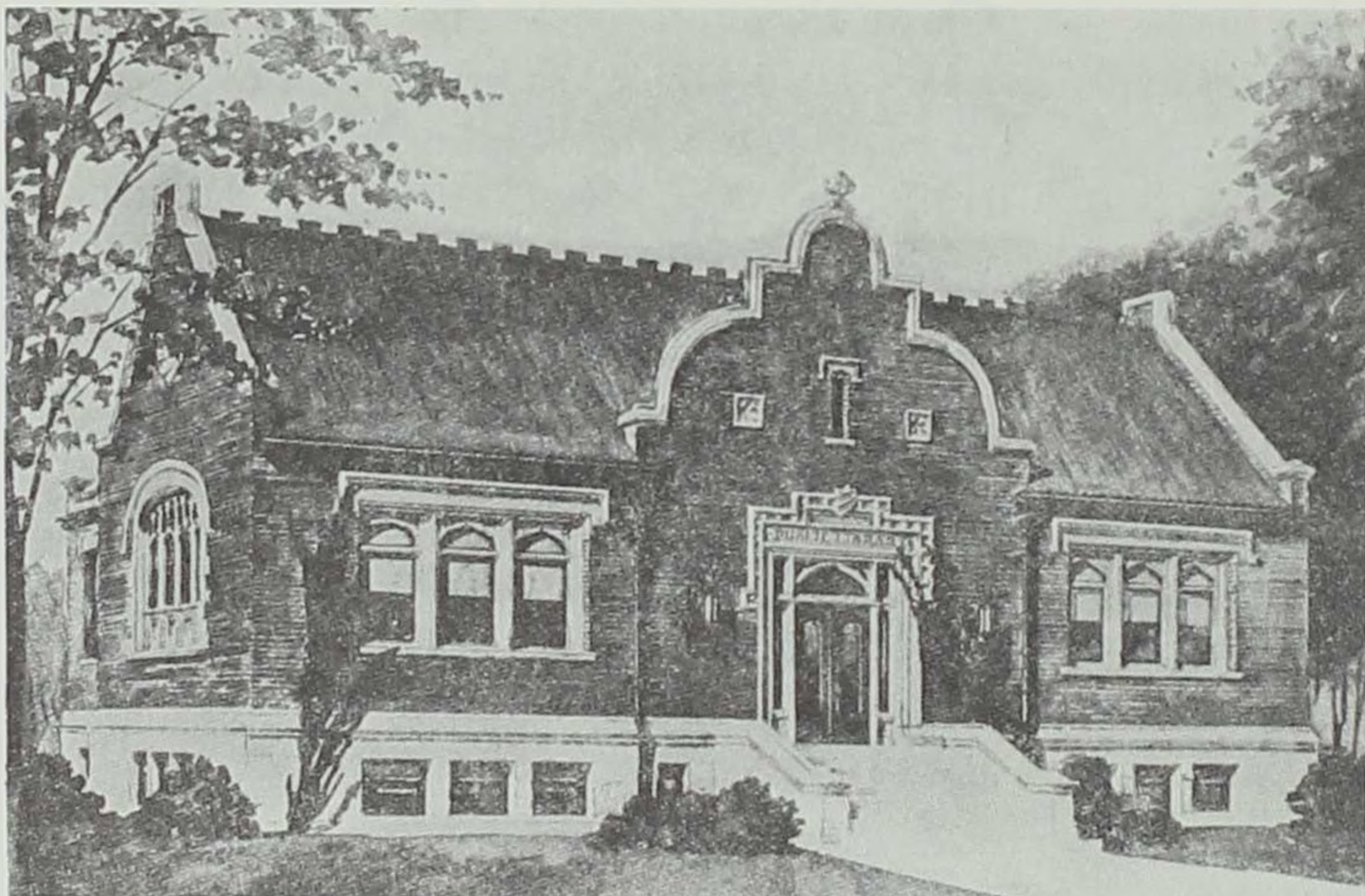
After 1905 Patton and Miller received commissions for two more Carnegie libraries in Iowa. The libraries at Red Oak and Onawa look very different from the earlier buildings.



The 1904 Charles City Public Library was one of Patton and Miller's twelve smaller Iowa libraries. The placement of the entrance illustrates the symmetrical balance of Patton and Miller's design. The one-story building was characterized by brick construction and "a foundation and front pillars of native boulders."

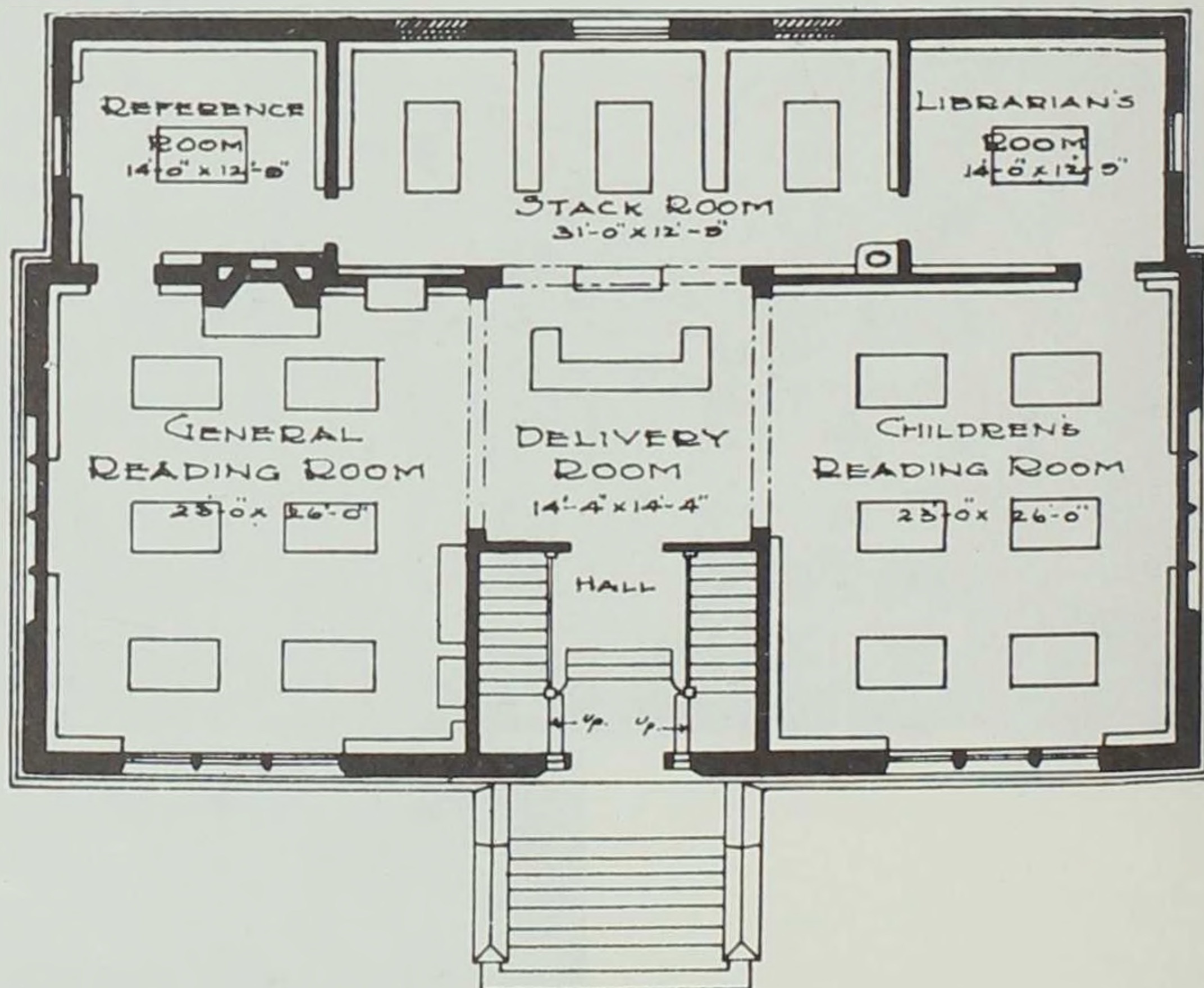
In contrast with the Charles City Public Library design (above), the 1904 Mount Pleasant Public Library is a fine example of a smaller Patton and Miller library with an asymmetrical design.





The architects' sketch of the Monticello Public Library provides another example of Patton and Miller's symmetrical design for smaller libraries. The library, completed in 1904, was characterized by "selected sand mold common brick trimmed with Bedford cut stone."

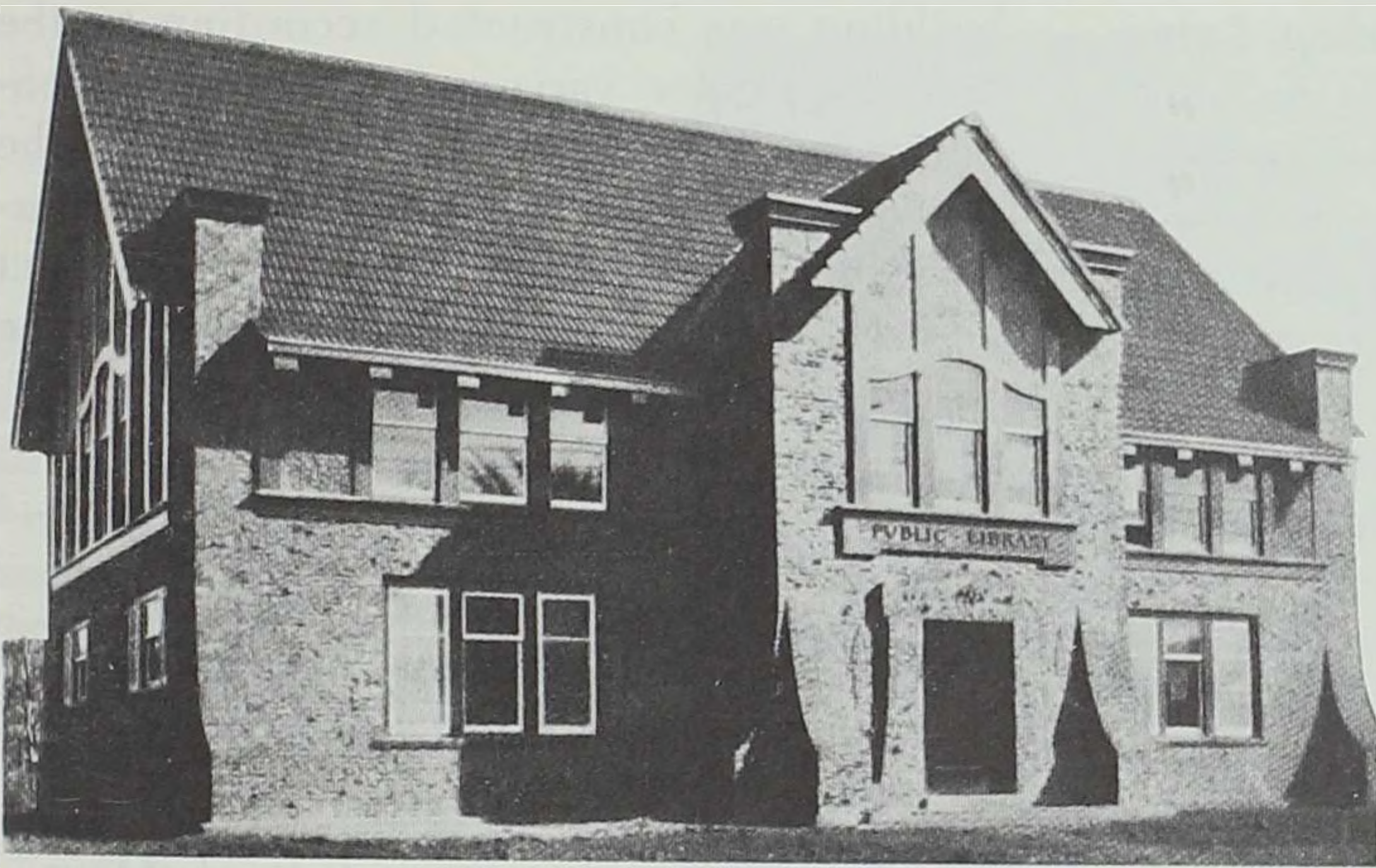
The Monticello Public Library's floor plan shows an interior arrangement "on the open shelf plan, utilizing all the walls of the building with a stack room in alcoves." In considering the plans for this library, the Iowa Library Commission concluded that the "plans are believed to provide the very best arrangement possible, and the combination of utility and economy with artistic taste promises excellent results."



Though Miller described the Red Oak library as "Elizabethan English," that phrase did not begin to cover the unusual features of the building, while the Onawa library could not be made to fit any historic style.

In 1905 the architects began designing a series of these more original works. The various movements of Early Modern architecture in Europe and America were becoming better known in the Midwest—indeed, America's own version of Early Modern, the Prairie

School, was almost entirely a Midwestern phenomenon. In addition, the works of the Glasgow School and the Art Nouveau style of France and Belgium were receiving some attention, while German Early Modern architects exhibited at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. Of even greater significance was the Austrian movement, known as the Vienna Secession, which had particular appeal for less radical architects because of its derivation from formal, classical styles. Finally, influence from



The 1909 Red Oak Public Library was a Patton and Miller design of a very different style. The two-story building was characterized by a rough-textured clinker brick and half-timbering style and a gabled roof. (SHSI)

The Onawa Public Library was also completed in 1909, and, again, shows a Patton and Miller design very different from their earlier Iowa libraries. (photographed by Gerald Mansheim for the ISHD, Historic Preservation)



the Arts and Crafts movement began to show itself in otherwise Classical buildings with simple plastered walls with dark oak trim and cozy inglenooks and fireplaces. While later Patton and Miller buildings were not examples of the Prairie School, many of them nevertheless show the influence of these various modern currents. Thus, the Red Oak library had a strong Arts and Crafts orientation with its treatment of the half-timbering and the use of rough-textured "clinker" bricks, while the Onawa library combined Art Nouveau curves with rectilinear details derived from the Vienna Secession. Some of these trends were

visible in earlier libraries. The interior of the Eldora library, for example, was pure Arts and Crafts, while the heavy flower pots and urns of the Clinton library and the stylized classical details of the Webster City library were reminiscent of the Austrian Early Modern style.

To the librarian and, indeed, Andrew Carnegie, the plan of the building was more important than the style of the exterior. Miller described the most common plan of a public library to the Iowa Library Association:

the location of the entrance [is] at the

center of the front of the building. Lying directly back of the entrance is the delivery room; to the right and left of the delivery room in the two wings, we find a general reading room and reference room, a children's reading room, and back of the delivery room, to the rear, is located a stack room, and of a width that will overlap the ends of the two reading rooms. In one of the internal angles formed by the intersection of the stack room and reading room, is found the librarian's and cataloguing room, and in the other a reference study, which is convenient to both the stack and general reading room. . . . This same general arrangement may be carried out in a building with a corner entrance, with slight modifications, and can be made a very practical plan.

This general plan, which came to be known as the "Chariton Plan" after the design used for the Chariton library, was followed in most of the firm's Iowa libraries. The Marshalltown

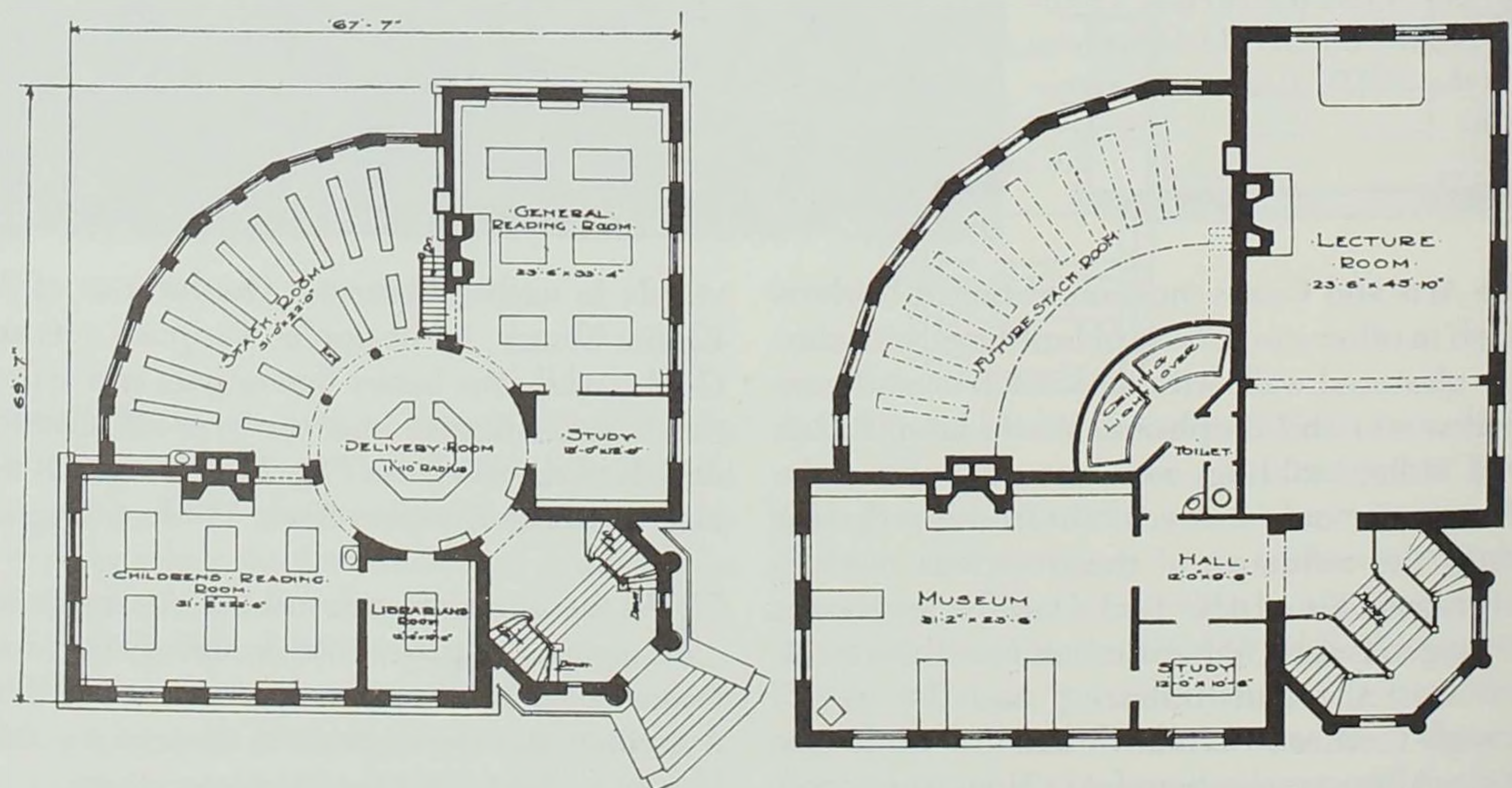
building was constructed according to the corner entrance variation of this plan mentioned by Miller. Miller further reminded the Association that, although most modern libraries were built with an open stack arrangement allowing free access to all the books to the patrons, the stacks still needed some supervision by the librarian.

There is only one arrangement that promises perfect supervision, viz: the radiating stack, which permits the librarian from one point to view every aisle between the bookcases.

. . . It, furthermore, gives better lighting than is possible with parallel book stacks. The aisles between the cases widen out towards the windows, permitting broader windows and more efficient lighting.

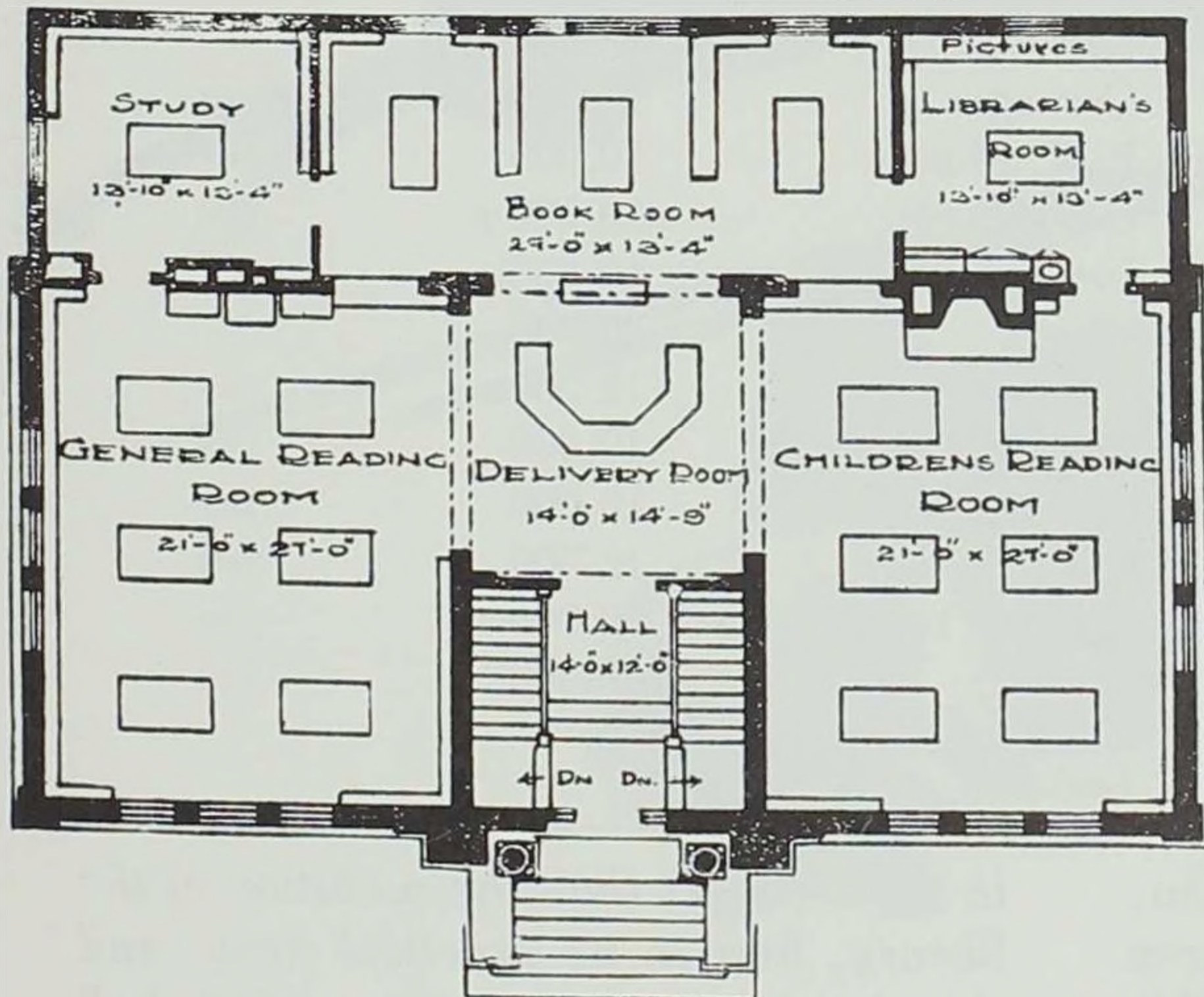
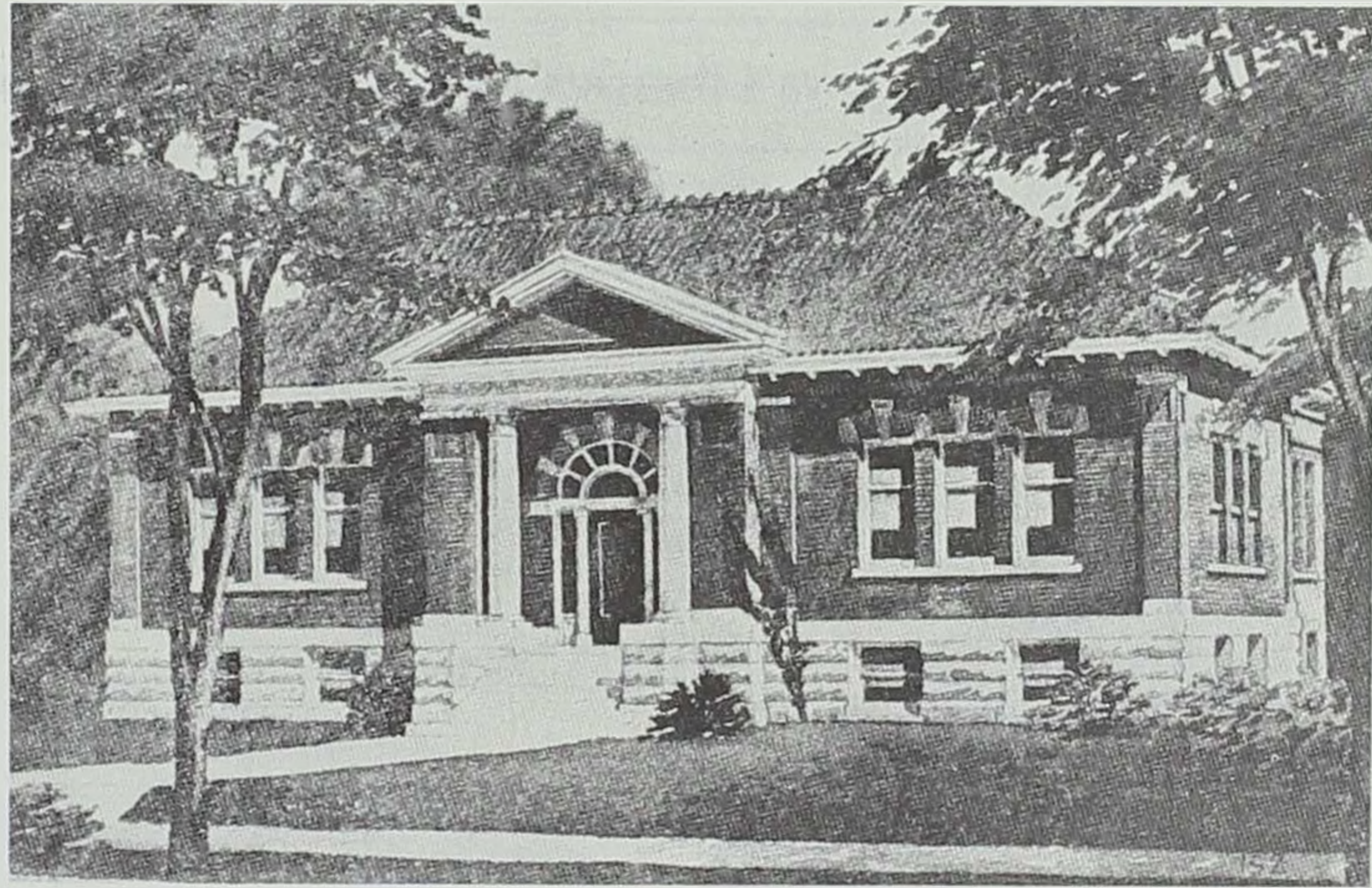
The Eldora library was built with the radiating stack idea used in combination with the features of the Chariton plan. Radiating stacks were used in the Marshalltown library as well.

The Patton and Miller firm was dissolved in



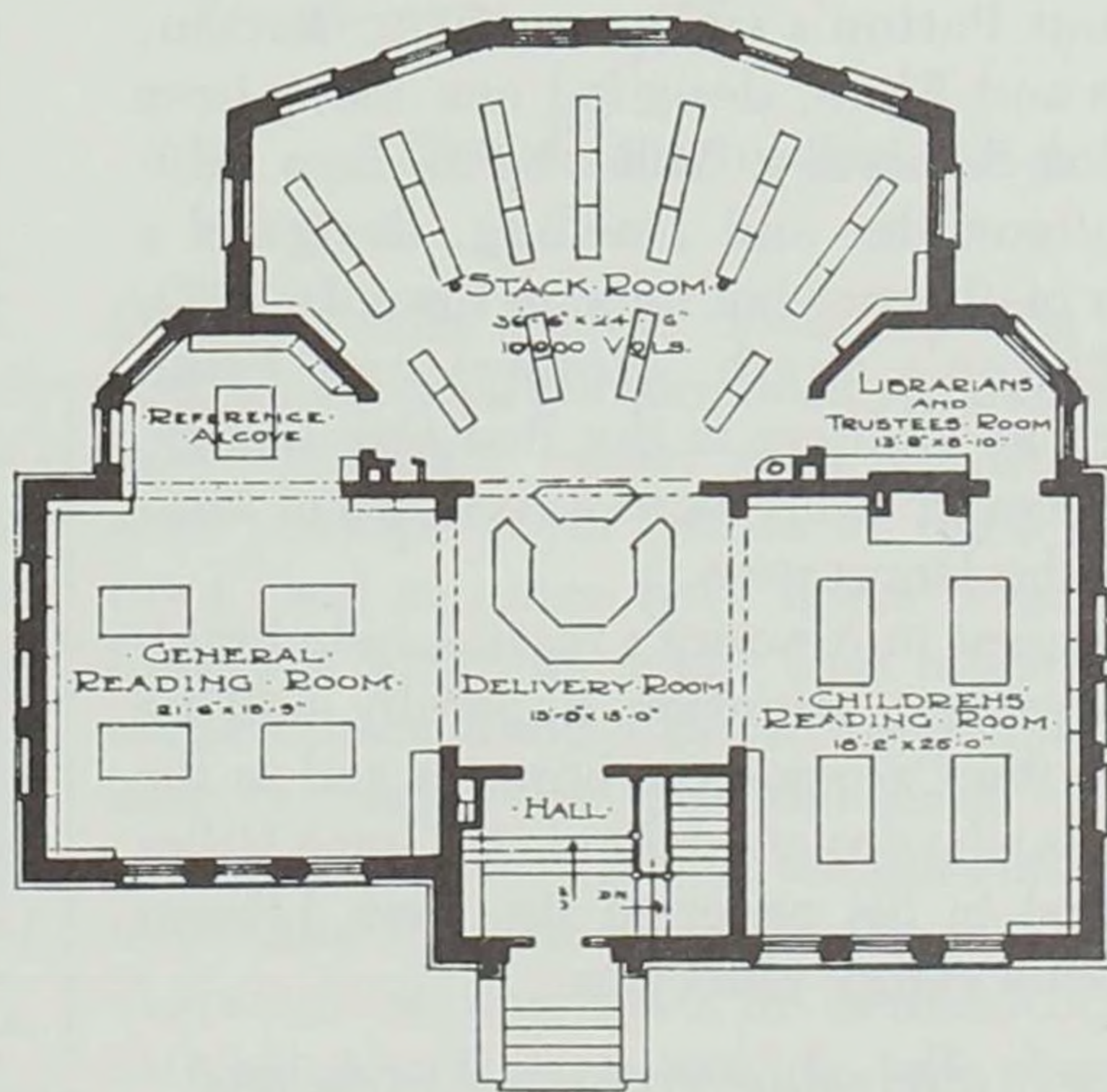
The Marshalltown Public Library floor plans illustrate not only the exceptional corner entrance variation of the Chariton Plan, but an effective use of the radiating stack arrangement for books.

The Chariton Free Public Library was completed in 1904 at a cost of \$11,000. One of the smaller-style Patton and Miller libraries, this building served as the model for the "Chariton Plan"—the design followed by Patton and Miller in most of their Iowa libraries.



The Chariton Plan suggested not only an entrance at the center of the front of the building, but an interior arrangement of rooms which provided a workable library plan.

The plan for the 1903 Eldora Public Library combined Patton and Miller's Chariton Plan with the radiating stack arrangement for books.



Iowa Libraries Designed by Patton and Miller

Location	Date Constructed	Funding	Cost	Still Standing?
Algona	1905	Carnegie	\$10,000	yes
Chariton	1904	Carnegie	11,000	yes
Charles City	1904	Carnegie	12,500	yes
Clinton	1903-04	Carnegie	45,000	yes
Council Bluffs	1904-05	Carnegie	70,000	yes
Eldora	1903	Carnegie	10,000	yes
Marengo	1905	Carnegie	10,000	yes
Marshalltown	1903	Carnegie	30,000	yes
Mason City	1904	Carnegie & citizens of Mason City	(20,000 + <u>10,000</u>) 30,000	yes
Monticello	1904	Carnegie	12,500	yes
Mount Pleasant	1904	Carnegie	12,500	yes
Muscatine	1901	P.M. Musser	40,000	no
Onawa	1908-09	Carnegie & Judge Addison Oliver	(10,000 + <u>10,000</u>) 20,000	yes
Red Oak	1909	Carnegie	12,500	yes
Shenandoah	1905	Carnegie	10,000	yes
Spencer	1904-05	Carnegie	10,000	no
Vinton	1903	Carnegie	12,500	yes
Webster City	1905	Kendall Young	50,000	yes
West Liberty	1906	Carnegie	7,500	yes

Source: Reports of the Iowa Library Commission, 1900-1910.

1912, but Patton's successor firm, Patton, Holmes and Flinn, designed one more Iowa library, at Sigourney. Miller's new firm, Miller, Fullenwider and Dowling, designed a number of libraries but none in Iowa. In 1923, after Patton's death, Holmes and Flinn designed an addition to the Red Oak library. Both successor firms were forced out of business by the Depression.

As interest in America's revival style buildings increases, attention hopefully will be given to the Carnegie era libraries and to the architects who designed them. As Grant Miller concluded in his paper to the Iowa Library Association eighty years ago:

No more interesting problem is presented

to the architect than the evolution of the library, first in its practical form, and then in an artistic expression, that shall fitly represent the high position the building occupies in the community.

Note on Sources

The Reports of the Iowa Library Commission, Des Moines, 1900 to 1912, proved to be a rich source of information for the preparation of this article. Also valuable were two books devoted to Carnegie libraries: George S. Bobinski, *Carnegie Libraries* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1969), and Theodore W. Koch, *A Book of Carnegie Libraries* (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1917). The *Collection of Views of Public Buildings Designed by Patton and Miller*, preserved at the University of Iowa Library, provided the base for the article's illustrations. Grant Miller's descriptive essay, "Library Buildings," was published in the *Quarterly of the Iowa Library Commission* in January 1903.