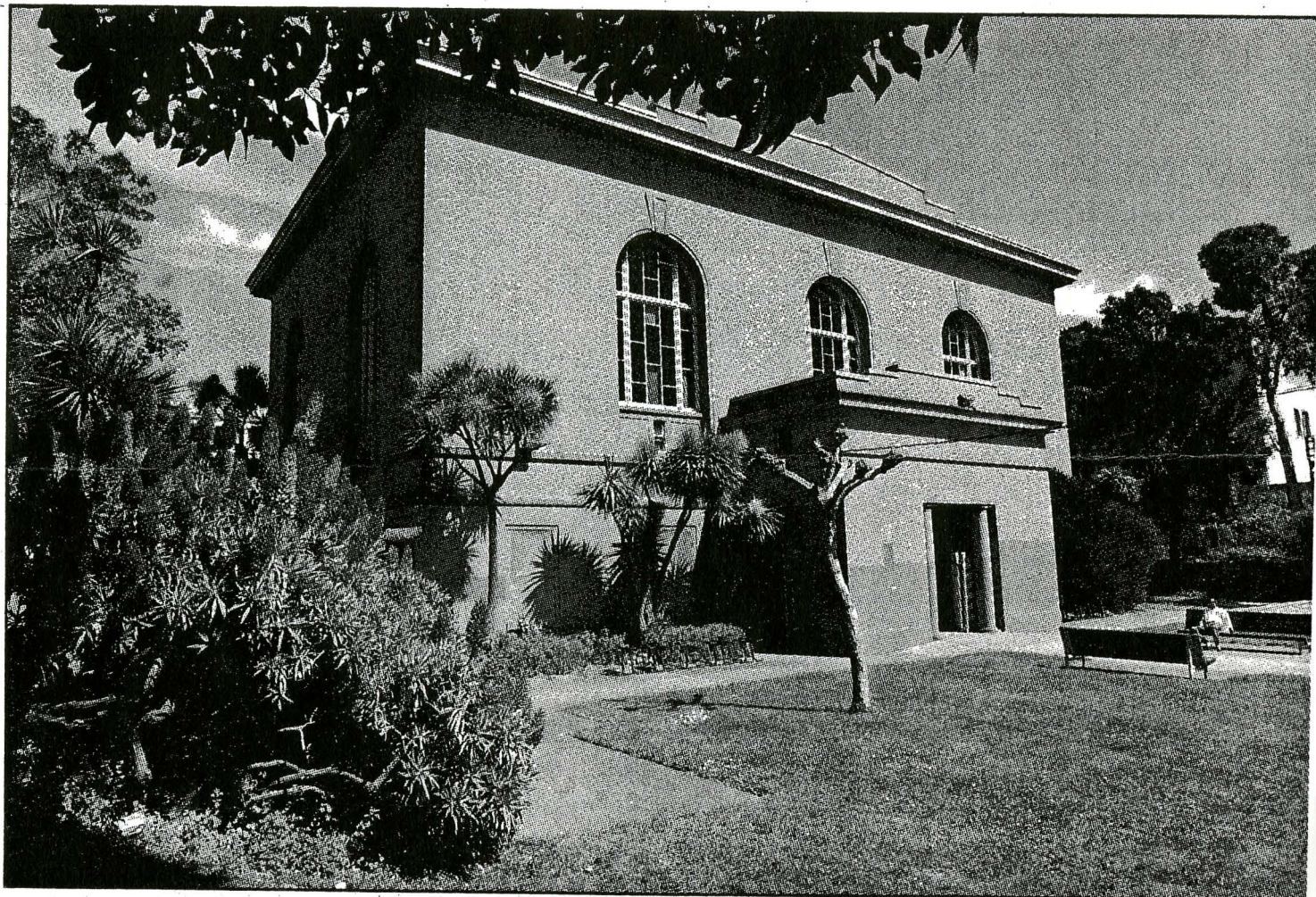


## BAY AREA VOICES



KATY RADDATZ / *The Chroni*

The Library Commission is concerned landmark status may interfere with the remodeling plans for the back of the Richmond branch library.



# Libraries to be named landmarks

## ► CARNEGIE

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rooms into well-lit cathedrals with ceilings more than 20 feet high, are still standing in San Francisco. Oakland still has six.

In San Francisco, for instance, the Golden Gate Valley branch at Green and Octavia streets resembles a terra cotta-clad Roman basilica. The Mission branch at Bartlett and 24th streets combines Italian renaissance and the Spanish eclectic styles.

"The Carnegie grant program was its own chapter in the history of the city," Kelley added.

In San Francisco, that history included a decade-long battle over accepting Carnegie's money. He had earned the hatred of labor because of his role in the 1892 Homestead strike, when several workers at facilities he owned in Pennsylvania were killed by company guards.

For much of the first decade of the 20th century, San Francisco had a labor-dominated city government that rebuffed the offer. But Mayor James D. Phelan championed the money, and eventually he prevailed.

Today, the seven branches are still operating, but several show their age. For example, at the busy Richmond branch on Ninth Avenue, decades of heavy use have

*"I'd hate to see this get torn down, or mangled. . . . But we have . . . public rest rooms*

*downstairs. How will they handle disabled access?"*

EILEEN WAMPOLE

Golden Gate branch head librarian

left a rut in the narrow stairs leading downstairs to the children's room.

The stone sheathing on the Presidio branch on Sacramento Street is badly chipped.

In November 2000, San Francisco voters approved a \$106 million bond issue to remodel or rebuild the city's 27 branch libraries for the new century. Even before the bond issue, the city had spent millions remodeling, expanding and improving disabled access at two of the Carnegies, the Chinatown and Mission branches.

The Chinatown branch, for in-

stance, was expanded through the rear of the building, so as not to damage the historic front facade. The Mission branch's elevator was designed so it didn't break up the main reading room.

But now, library commissioners say, they fear landmark status could make it harder for them to improve the old branches, while also honoring Carnegie's legacy. Landmarking would protect the branches' exteriors and important aspects of their interiors.

"I like the idea of preserving these lovely public buildings," said library commission member Steve Coulter. "But you add yet another agency in these buildings, and I wonder what problems you get into."

Out at the Golden Gate Valley branch, head librarian Eileen Wampole voiced similar sentiments.

"I'd hate to see this get torn down, or mangled. It's such a beautiful building, especially the interior. But we have two stories, with the meeting room and public rest rooms downstairs. How will they handle disabled access?" she asked, in remodeling a landmark.

While stressing that his board was likely to go ahead with a landmarking recommendation to the supervisors and Mayor Willie Brown, Kelley said he wanted to

work with the library.

"I'd like to think this adds allies for the libraries," he said. "We want to see the Carnegie buildings upgraded as they should be."

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## Bay Area Carnegie libraries

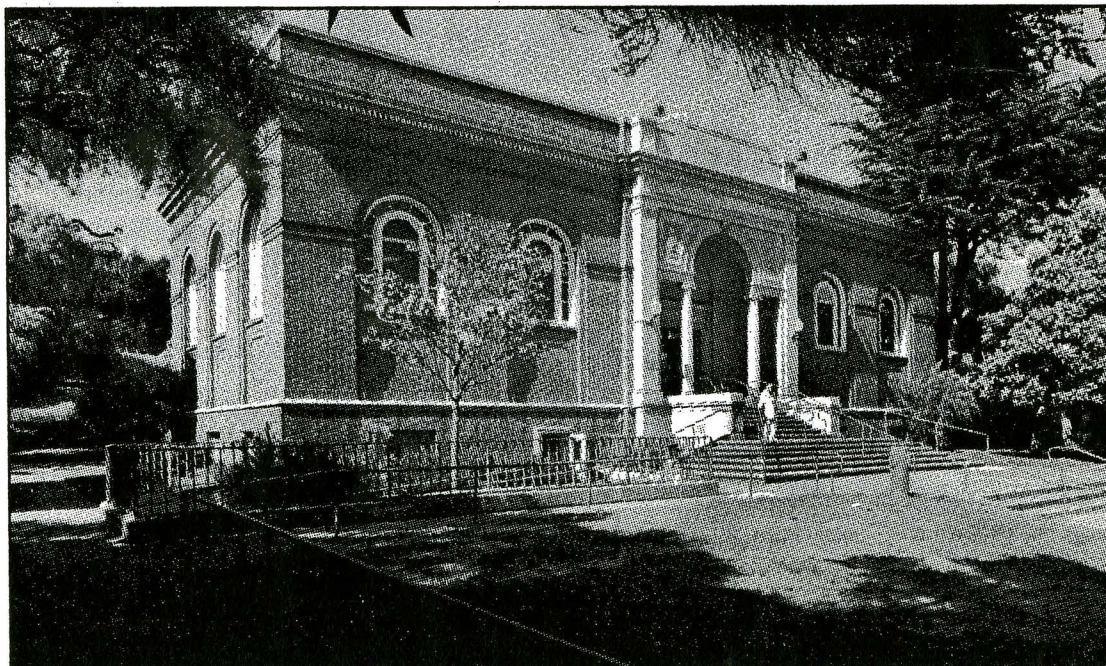
*Other Bay Area communities still have Carnegie library buildings, although some are used for other purposes such as historical museums and college offices:*

- Alameda, 2264 Santa Clara Ave.
- Antioch, 519 F St.
- Livermore, 2155 Third St.
- Mill Valley, 52 Lovell Ave.
- Oakland, 659 14th St., 5606 San Pablo Ave., 4805 Foothill Blvd., 1449 Miller Ave., 5205 Telegraph Ave., 5000 MacArthur Blvd.
- Richmond, 400 Nevin Ave.
- San Anselmo, 110 Tunstead Ave.
- San Rafael, 1100 E St.
- San Jose, 1102 E. Santa Clara St.
- South San Francisco, 306 Walnut Ave.

*Carnegie libraries that have been demolished, and the years they were used, are:*

- Berkeley, 1905-1929
- Concord, 1917-1959
- Hayward, 1906-1949
- Los Gatos, 1903-1954
- Palo Alto, 1904-1967
- Redwood City, 1905-1950
- San Jose, 1903-1950
- San Leandro, 1909-1955
- San Mateo 1907-1968
- Vallejo 1904-1969
- Walnut Creek, 1916-1961.

Source: Carnegie Libraries of California, [www.carnegie-libraries.org](http://www.carnegie-libraries.org)



The stones on the 80-year-old Presidio branch library on Sacramento Street are badly chipped.