

## = Blackstone Library =

T. B. Blackstone Memorial Library is a building that is part of the Chicago Public Library System and is named after Timothy Blackstone . The building was designed by Chicago architect Solon S. Beman . It is now known as the Chicago Public Library - Blackstone Branch and commonly referred to as Blackstone Library , or Blackstone Branch and sometimes Blackstone for short . The Concord Granite building 's two @-@ year construction started in 1902 , and it was dedicated on January 8 , 1904 . Blackstone Library marks the beginning of the Chicago Branch Library System as the first dedicated branch in the system . Blackstone is also the only branch of the 79 @-@ branch Chicago Public Library branch system that was constructed using private funding .

The building is located in Chicago 's Kenwood community area in Cook County , Illinois , United States and serves the Hyde Park , Kenwood , and Oakland community areas . The branch celebrated its 100th anniversary of service in 2004 . Today , the library has bronze and mahogany furnishings and has themed paintings on the rotunda ceiling . The library is equipped with custom @-@ designed furniture and makes public Wi @-@ Fi access available to its patrons .

## = = History = =

The library was dedicated to the memory of Timothy Beach Blackstone , President of the Chicago and Alton Railroad from 1864 to 1899 , a period longer than any of his contemporaries . Blackstone , who had died on May 26 , 1900 , was also the founding president of the Union Stock Yards . He had owned the property on which the Blackstone Library now stands , and he donated this tract for the construction of the library after his death . The library was built on the tract through a codicil in his will , carried out by his wife , Isabella Norton Blackstone ( 1838 ? 1928 ) , after his death . Blackstone Library was his contribution to the city where he had made his fortune and stands as a monument to his generosity . Blackstone is 13 @,@ 794 sq ft ( 1 @,@ 281 @.@ 5 m2 ) and its original cost was \$ 250 @,@ 000 ( \$ 6 @,@ 837 @,@ 500 today ) .

Although the Blackstones lived downtown , they maintained numerous close friendships in the affluent Hyde Park neighborhood , which then included what is now called the Kenwood community area . Prior to the donation of the Blackstone Library , the Chicago Public Library System had been renting reading room spaces around the city and had been seeking stand alone branches . On January 8 , 1904 , Isabella Blackstone handed the keys and deed to the Timothy B. Blackstone Library to the city 's Library Board members . Blackstone Library became the first branch library in the Chicago Public Library System . The building retains a Lake Park Avenue address although the neighboring section of Lake Park was moved about a half a block east several decades ago .

At least three renovations have occurred , which have expanded , renovated and updated the library . From 1938 ? 1939 the new children 's room annex , a Works Progress Administration project , was added at a cost of \$ 68 @,@ 400 ( \$ 1 @,@ 163 @,@ 618 ) . During this annexation one of a set of Howard Van Doren Shaw townhouses was razed . From 1977 ? 1980 a major restorative renovation occurred . Blackstone was rededicated on November 18 , 1980 , in recognition of completion of the three years of work . There was also a 2004 renovation for the centennial .

Blackstone donated a larger James Blackstone Memorial Library ( 1891 , opened 1893 ) , in his father 's memory to Branford , Connecticut , Blackstone 's birthplace . In addition to the James Blackstone Library in Branford , there is a library named " Blackstone Library " in Blackstone , MA . The architect for both the Branford and Chicago libraries was Solon S. Beman .

## = = Service = =

As one of the 79 Chicago Public Library branch libraries , Blackstone Library serves the Hyde Park , Kenwood , and Oakland community areas . These communities include 17 elementary schools and 4 high schools . The 2000 census service area population was 50 @,@ 084 .

In 2003 , the " Friends of Blackstone Branch Library " was formed , making the Blackstone Branch

one of approximately 34 branches to have such a support group . The volunteer support group attempts to " serve as an advisory council for Chicago 's first branch library , promote use and improvement of the library , and provide volunteer and fundraising services for Blackstone " .

The Blackstone Library participates in most Chicago Public Library programs and partnerships , including Great Kids Museum Passport Program , the Monthly Adult Book Club Discussion as well as many annual events and activities . The branch also partners with neighborhood institutions such as the Hyde Park Art Center and the Smart Museum for programs and workshops . Like all branches , the library provides both free wi @-@ fi access and free terminals with both internet access and printing facilities . Blackstone has 5 internet terminals requiring reservations for each session of up to one hour and 1 express terminal that does not require reservations for sessions of up to 15 minutes . Currently , patrons can use the terminals for up to two free internet sessions per day and print for a small charge per page anywhere in the Chicago Public Library system .

= = Design = =

The building was designed by the architect Solon S. Beman and modeled after Beman 's Merchant Tailors Building , the domed temple facing the lagoon in the 1893 World 's Columbian Exposition , and the Erechtheum at the Athenian Acropolis . Greek Mythology teaches that Demeter , the goddess , bestowed agriculture and civilization upon the world during Erechtheus 's reign . The library 's rotunda murals have thematic titles : " Labor " , " Literature " , " Art " and " Science " .

The following is a summary of the building 's features : Tiffany style dome ; Marble column and walls in the rotunda and foyer ; 4 overhead rotunda murals painted by Oliver Dennett Grover , mural painter for the World Columbian Exposition ; 1 in ( 2 @. @ 5 cm ) square Italian marble mosaic flooring ; glass @-@ floored mezzanine ; 2 @, @ 800 pounds ( 1 @, @ 300 kg ) bronze plate , solid copper core outer front doors ; 2 150 pounds ( 68 kg ) lbs. bronze and glass inner doors ; 12 inches ( 30 cm ) thick granite walls ; and ionic columns .

The building 's adult reading room is equipped with mahogany furniture specifically designed for the space . It also contains matching built @-@ in shelving and custom @-@ made bronze lamps . The circulation desk area has two @-@ tiered bronze @-@ trimmed book stacks . The mezzanine floor is composed of glass blocks .

= = Related structures and ways = =

Although parts of South Blackstone Avenue south of 53rd Street accommodate two @-@ way traffic , near the library it is a northbound street that accommodates one @-@ way traffic running north along the 1436 east block and ending immediately to the west of ( behind ) the Blackstone Library at 4900 south ( see Kenwood map in external links below and picture to the right ) . The street was also named after Timothy Blackstone well after the library was built . The Blackstone Library does not bear a Blackstone Avenue address , despite its proximity . Blackstone Hotel and adjacent Blackstone Theatre ( now the Merle Reskin Theatre ) would also be named after Timothy Blackstone , whose mansion had stood on their site .

= = Photo gallery = =