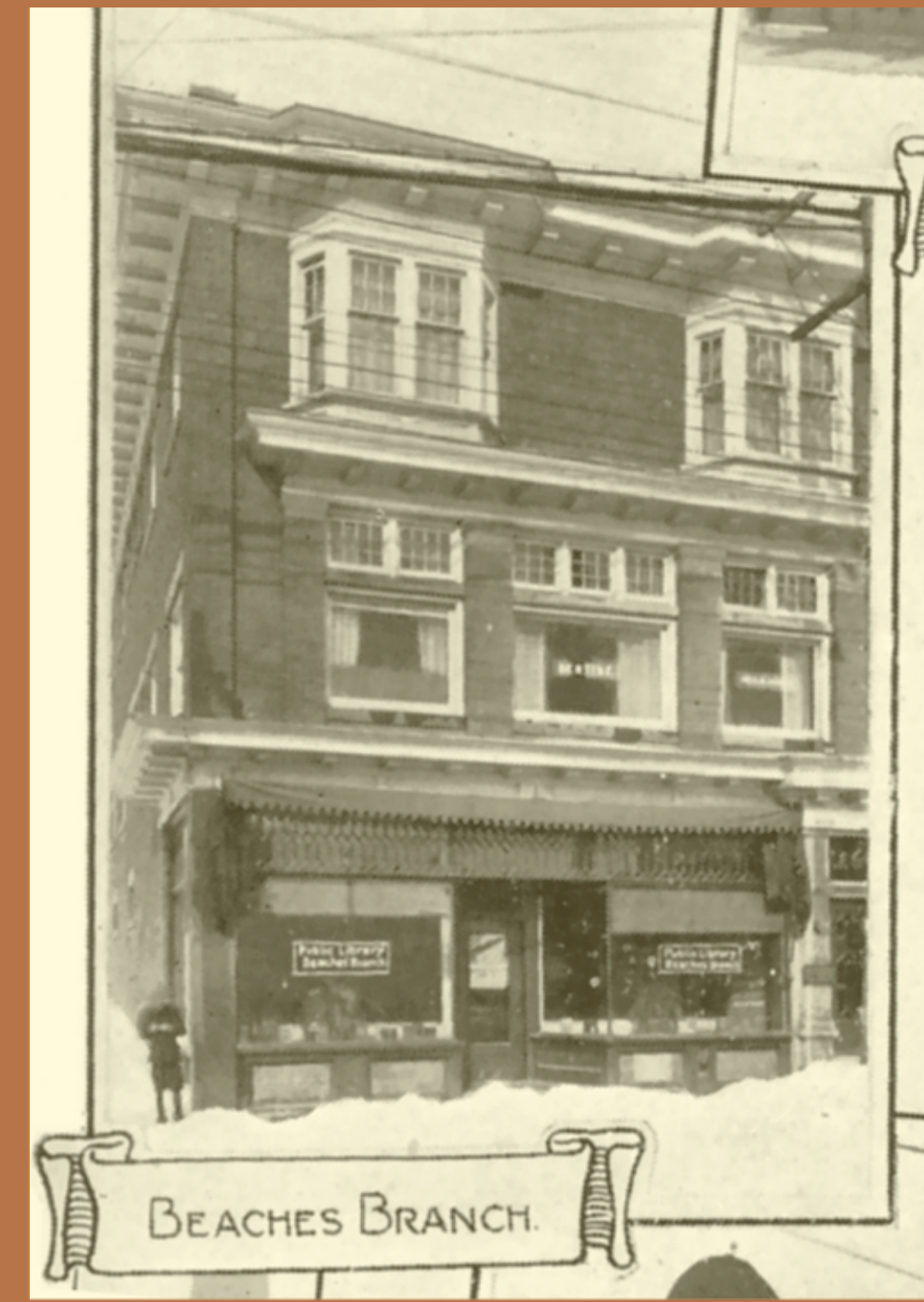


BEACHES BRANCH HISTORY

Prepared by Toronto Public Library staff for the 2016 Centennial

TEMPORARY STOREFRONT BRANCH, OPERATED 1914-16

Responding to requests from local residents and politicians since 1910, the Toronto Public Library Board opened its first Beaches Branch in a storefront on Queen Street East at the northeast corner of Hambly Avenue on 2 March 1914.



Library Branch For Beach Residents

Petition Made Nearly Four Years Ago
Has Borne Fruit.

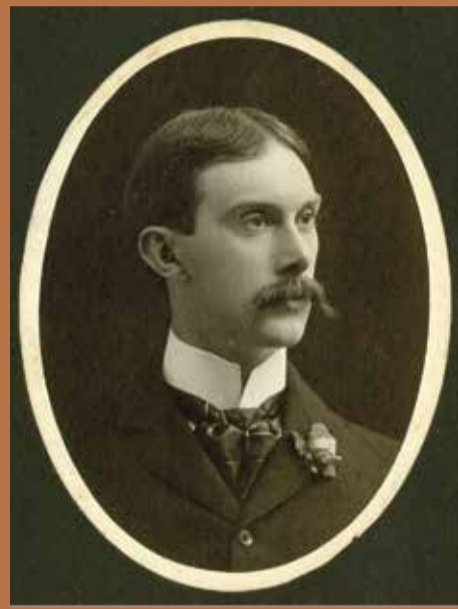
On Monday afternoon the fourteenth Public Library will be opened at the corner of Queen Street and Hambly Avenue. This will be known as the Beaches Branch, and it is the result of a deputation which nearly four years ago came to the Public Library Board and asked for a Beaches Branch to be established. The members of that memorable deputation were Mrs. Campbell, Mrs. Byfield, Mrs. Watt, Mrs. Noble and Mrs. Gay.

This library will be open on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday of each week from 2 to 6 and from 7 to 9. Miss Nelson, of the Church Street Library, will be in charge, and already some hundreds of Beach residents have taken advantage of the day for registration.

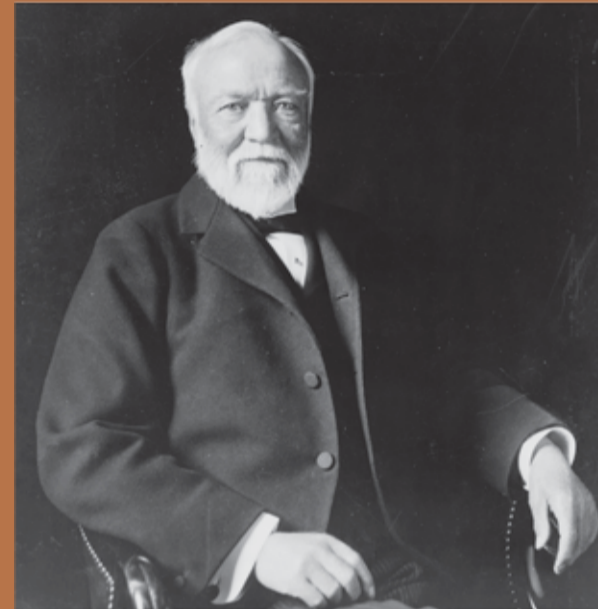
Branch opening, 2 March 1914

PLANNING AND BUILDING THE PERMANENT BRANCH, 1914-16 - EDEN SMITH AND SONS, ARCHITECTS

Beaches Branch was the last of three nearly identical libraries (together with Wychwood and High Park) that the Toronto Public Library opened in 1916 with a \$50,000 grant promised by the Carnegie Corporation of New York on 25 November 1914. The final cost to build the branch was \$17,200.



George H. Locke, Toronto Public Library's chief librarian from 1908 to 1936, wrote the first letter to the Carnegie Corporation on 22 June 1914 requesting funds to build three new libraries in the city's "outlying districts."

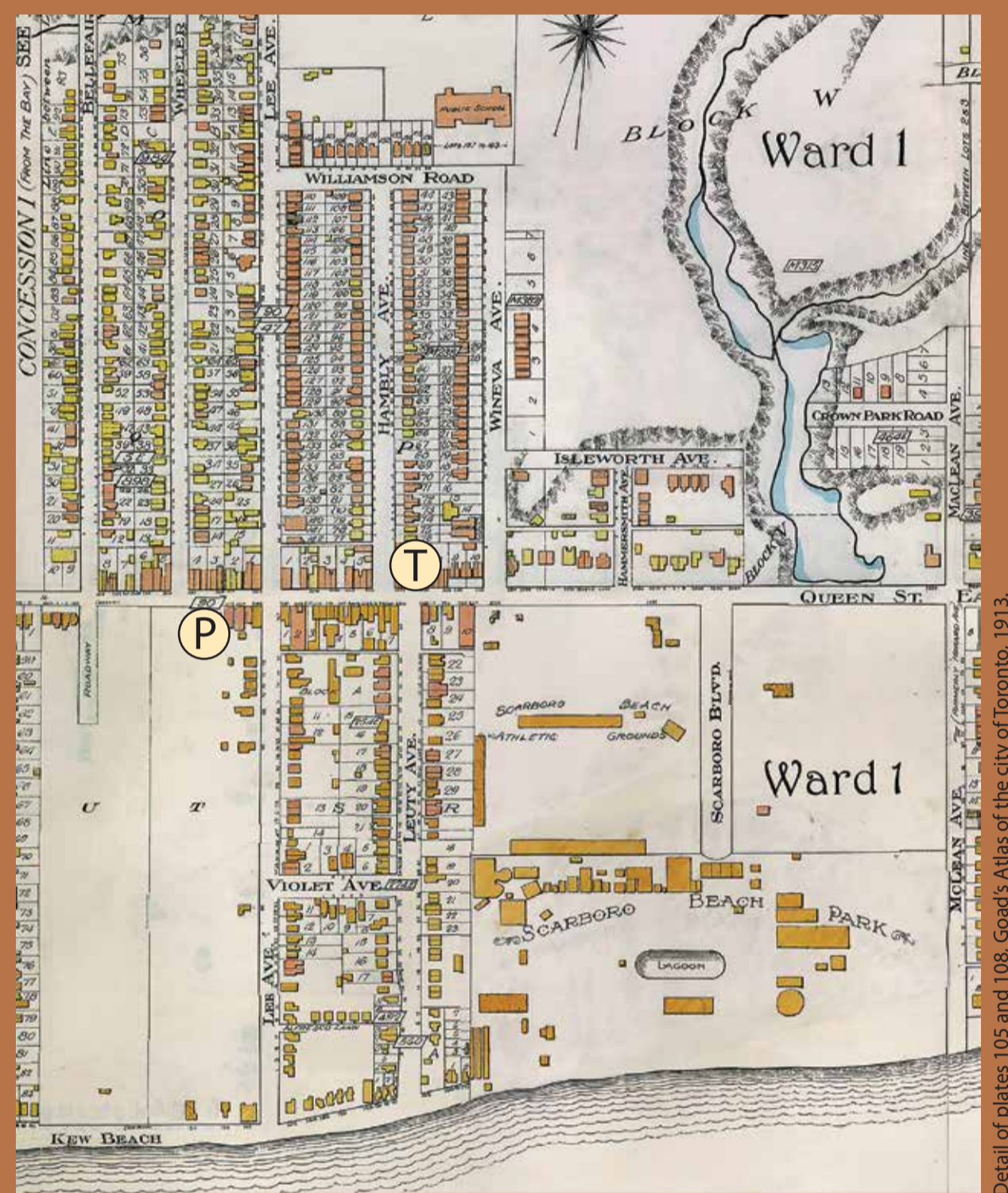


Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) was one of the wealthiest industrialists of his day whose best-known philanthropy was libraries. Between 1903 and 1915, he and his foundation gave \$487,500 to build ten public libraries in what is now Toronto.



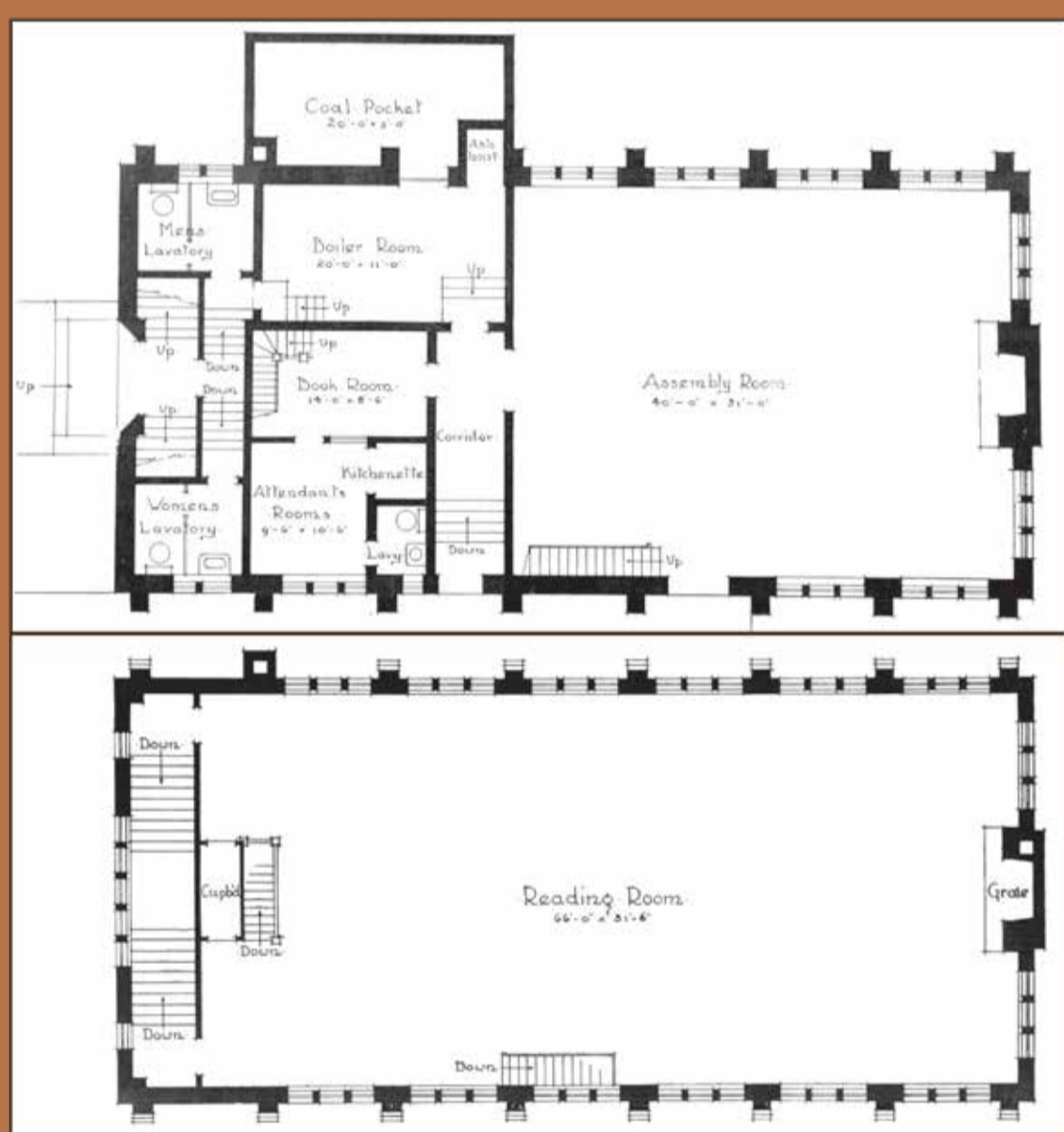
Eden Smith (1859-1949), called the most consistent Arts and Crafts architect in Toronto, designed the three new libraries with his sons, Wychwood Branch being the prototype. The plans were approved by the Carnegie Corporation

on 22 March 1915, and construction on Beaches Branch began in autumn 1915.



Neighbourhood in the vicinity of the temporary (T) and permanent (P) branch, 1913

One Carnegie grant condition was the provision of a library site by the local municipality. On 31 May 1915, despite considerable opposition to having a library on parklands, Toronto City Council approved supplying a section of Kew Gardens (part of Lot T, Plan 90) for Beaches Branch. Located on the south side of Queen Street East, 100 feet west of Lee Avenue, the site had a width of 100 feet and a depth of 125 feet, and was valued at \$15,000.



Eden Smith and Sons' floor plans for Wychwood Branch, replicated at Beaches and High Park branches

PROVIDING LIBRARY SERVICE, 1916-79

Beaches Branch opened on 13 December 1916, and soon became an important part of the cultural life of the community. In addition to providing reading materials and children's activities, the branch was a pioneer in offering innovative programming such as art exhibits, concerts, book lovers' evenings and dramatic performances.

BEACHES LIBRARY OPEN.
Building Modelled After the Grammar School.

The new public library at Kew Beach, Toronto, modelled after the grammar schools of Shakespeare's day, is open. Mr. N. B. Gash, K.C., Chairman of the Library Board, presided at the opening, and he was supported by a number of educationists. Mr. George H. Locke, Chief Librarian, described the work done and the aims of the institution. "In such a type of room Shakespeare studied and read, and it is the latest and best type on the continent. It is a gift to you, and not bought with your taxes. Do you know that an assessee at \$1,000 contributes only twenty-five cents to public libraries?"

Mr. Carson, Provincial Inspector of Public Libraries, said that the Toronto branch libraries compared favorably with any in the States.

Opening ceremonies, 13 December 1916



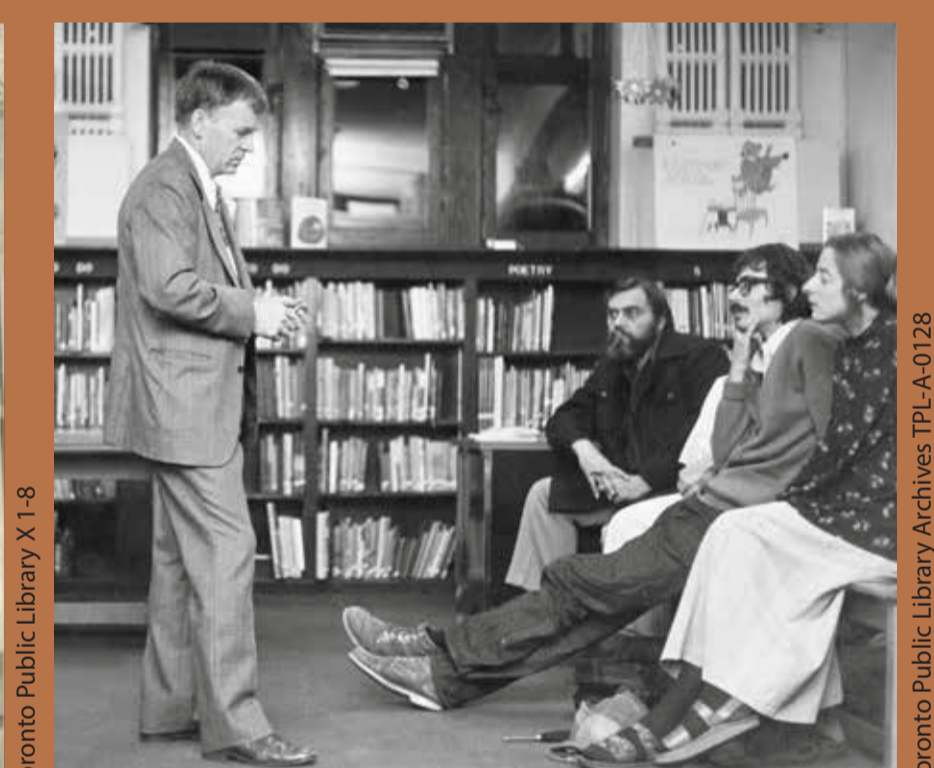
Exterior, 1916



Adult Reading Room and Library, 1923



Beaches Library Drama League, 1920



Local artist and author William Kurelek (1927-1977) displayed his art and conducted a program in 1975

FIRST RENOVATION AND ADDITION, 1979-80 STINSON MONTGOMERY SJAM ARCHITECTS

The original Queen Street entrance was turned into a bay window and a new entrance was incorporated into a shed addition on the west side. The renovated branch reopened on 26 September 1980. It had been listed on the City of Toronto's Inventory of Heritage Properties on 1 October 1979.



West façade showing shed addition and new front entrance, about 2004

SECOND RENOVATION AND ADDITION, 2004-05 (JOINT VENTURE) PHILLIP H. CARTER ARCHITECT & KINGSLAND+ARCHITECTS INC.

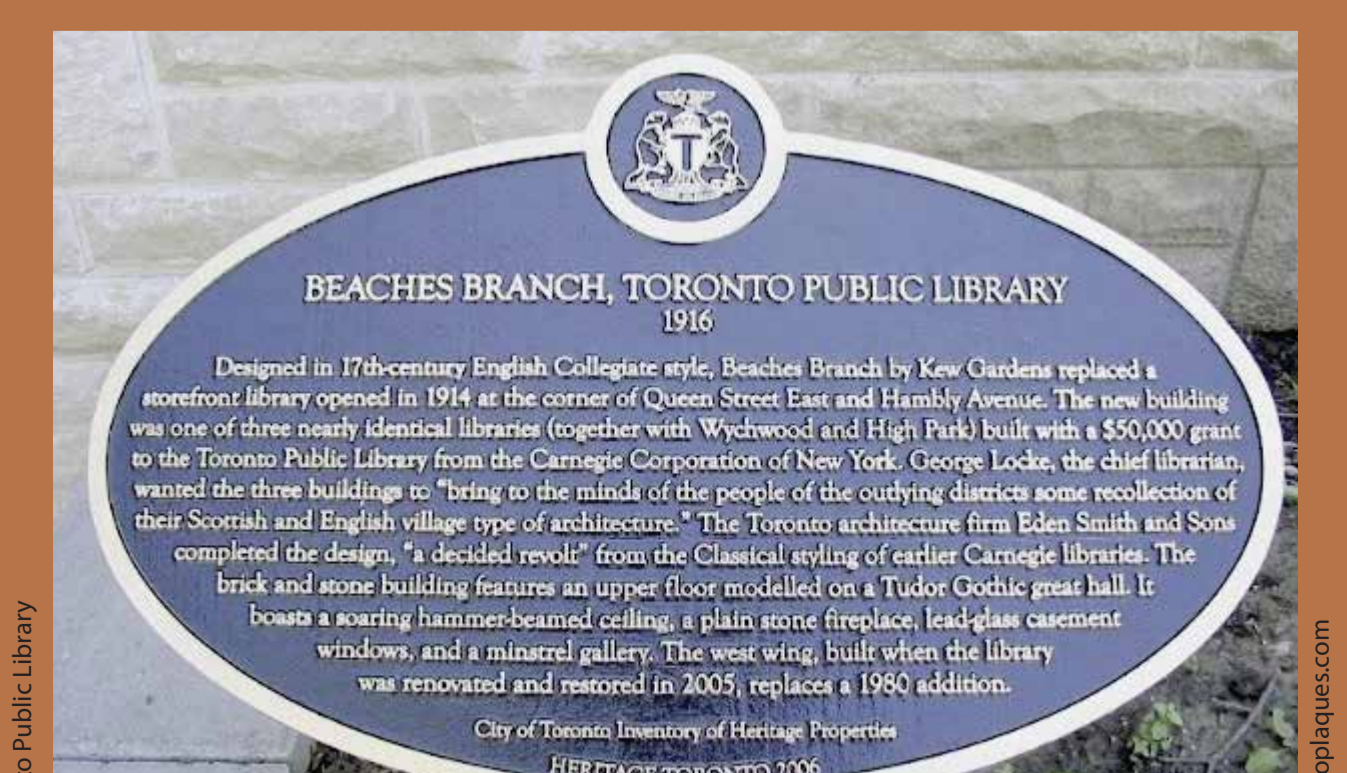
The original library entrance facing Queen Street was restored, and the west wing was rebuilt with a two-storey addition overlooking Kew Gardens and Queen Street. The branch closed on 17 April 2004 and reopened on 20 January 2005.



Exterior and interior, 2005



Woodsworth, installed on 7 July 2005 and named in a contest in 2007



Heritage Toronto plaque presented on 30 September 2006