

**The Haydon Burns Public Library, Jacksonville, Florida:
A Preservation Case Study**

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Building Summary

Situated in the heart of downtown Jacksonville, Florida, Taylor Hardwick's Haydon Burns Public Library (Fig. 1) is an edifice of color, range, and civility. Built in 1965 at the tail end of Jacksonville's so-called "Decade of Progress", the Library was intended as a modern civic building, an attempt to recapture the public's attention and instill pride and confidence. It might be argued that most civic buildings are dressed with such intentions, but the Haydon Burns was less about intimidation and more about inclusion. The Library was one of the first buildings in Jacksonville to incorporate into its design a major work of public art, which, incidentally, doubled as a practicality. Also, it was the fruit of a modern collaborative effort between Hardwick's design team and renowned library design consultant John Hall Jacobs. This led to many innovative building features and systems, including calculated square footage based on space needed per patron, passive cooling, deliberate space-user assignation, and many others.

The Haydon Burns replaced the aged Carnegie Library (Fig. 2), a stately but wholly ineffective library building designed by Henry Klutho in 1905. The new Library could not have been any more different from its 21,000-square-foot, neoclassical predecessor: the Haydon Burns is a 122,000-square-foot concrete-frame block adorned with hundreds of thousands of rectangular glass tiles and 88 two-story, pre-cast concrete fins. While not a strict adherent to any particular subsidiary of Modernism, the Haydon Burns is a Mid-Century temple of modern layout, innovation, and proportion. It serves as an eye-catching work of public art, and was once an efficient and effective library.

Historical Context

Jacksonville's first free public library was built using funds donated by steel magnate Andrew Carnegie. While funded by and named after the great industrialist, the Library was designed by Prairie School pupil Henry John Klutho, who designed many Jacksonville structures after the Great Fire of 1901. The Carnegie served Jacksonville-proper's denizens for 60 years. By the 1950s, Klutho's Carnegie was grossly inefficient, attempting to serve a population of well over 150,000 when it was designed to serve less than 30,000. This was due less to the design and more to the unprecedented growth period in which Jacksonville found itself between 1950 and 1965. While this growth nullified the usefulness of the Carnegie Library, it allowed the city's handlers to generate revenue necessary to develop their civic infrastructure¹

In 1953, the Florida State Legislature wrote and passed the Regional Home Office Law, a law that would provide attractive tax benefits to national or regional corporations relocating their home or local offices to Jacksonville. This drew to Jacksonville such companies as Blue Cross & Blue Shield, Prudential, and a litany of other insurance companies. The presence of these companies helped create jobs and spur financial growth. Over the next ten years, Jacksonville would be thrust into its so-called Decade of Progress, a period of municipal enhancement intended to bring about social and architectural change.

In 1958, with confidence in city leaders at its peak, Mayor Haydon Burns was able to secure enough support to levy new taxes in the form of a \$30 million bond. From this bond a new city hall, courthouse, coliseum, civic auditorium, and massive sewage treatment plant were constructed. By 1962 the Decade of Progress had been given a cap

¹ City of Jacksonville Landmark Nomination Sheet

in the form of a \$7.65 million bond intended to fund construction of a marina, parking lots, and, finally, a new library facility. The inspiration for the construction of a new library stemmed from a 1957 library Board of Trustees study, wherein the services of the nationally-known library consultant, John Hall Jacobs were employed. Jacobs came to the conclusion that the Carnegie facility was grossly inadequate. In addition to his evaluation of the existing facility, Jacobs was asked to provide suggestions on where to build a new facility, and to what extent. Using American Library Association standards as his guide, Jacobs suggested that to adequately serve its patronage, a library must provide approximately .45 square feet per user; based on Jacksonville's burgeoning population of nearly 230,000 individuals, such a recommendation would necessitate a library with at least 101,000 square feet. What's more is at least 1/4 to 1/3 of that square-footage needed to be on the ground floor, a concept that may have been suggested as a means of increasing accessibility and democratizing the library's resources².

Initially the Haydon Burns was a success, but over time, as the population of Jacksonville grew (outward) and the constant need to acquire new items and contemporize became too much of a burden, the Library was forced into retirement. In September of 2004 the Library checked out its last book and was closed the next morning. The responsibilities of the Jacksonville Public Library system's main library fell to the newly constructed main library just a few blocks away from the Haydon Burns. This new library (Fig. 3), designed by Robert A.M. Stern and associates, is a massive, 300,000-square-foot temple to technological and architectural innovation – much like its predecessor, which remains vacant but relatively unscathed³.

² City of Jacksonville Landmark Nomination Sheet

³ RAMSA website

Significance: Architectural/Conceptual/Civil

The Haydon Burns' strongest case for significance comes from its singular design and innovative concept. Taylor Hardwick's design is a mixture of the practical and the purposefully applied. The concept, which Hardwick helped implement, can be attributed in no small way to John Hall Jacobs, the aforementioned library design consultant, whose contributions were not to the structure, but use-of-space and execution of efficiency – two things lacking in a majority of the country's older facilities designed before WWII.

To put it compactly, the Haydon Burns Library was (and to some extent still is) a singular contribution to the scope of Mid-Century Modernism that successfully integrated the practical needs of a municipal library and the socio-aesthetic needs of a city's denizens. The Library is not all that dissimilar from the "Miesian Box" described by noted architectural historians James Massey and Shirley Maxwell; it is, in essence, a large, squat box with an open interior and honesty in construction⁴. The similarities end there, however, as Hardwick's design strives for recognition as a humanizing force, one that is modern (Modern) but also humanistic and acceptable to the users.

The interior spaces are uncluttered with walls and the only obstructions to air and movement are the odd concrete column and glass partitions (Fig. 4). Hardwick designed the Library to be as open as possible, with glazing at street level as if to catch passersby with the tease of the Library's wares (Fig. 5). Another significant design innovation was the inclusion of a sort of air-lock, a patron-staff interaction zone separated from the main section of the library. The benefit of such a system is the reduction of din, as it secludes the louder, busier aspects of the library. The second floor of the building is an exposed, H-shaped plane, visible through glass panels to those on the first floor. The side of the H,

⁴ City of Jacksonville Landmark Nomination Sheet

from south to north, served as the Children's department and quiet research areas, respectively; the center of the H was a bridge between.

The Haydon Burns is a three-story edifice with two basement floors nestled into the mild, downward north-to-south grade. The exterior is a stunning array of color and form: stretching across two stories a series of pre-cast concrete fins clings to the skin, which is predominantly three-inch thick pre-cast concrete paneling (Fig. 6). These fins do provide visual appeal but are mostly a practical measure. Due to the relative thinness of the building's skin, these fins help to stabilize and protect the exterior from high winds, as well as create air turbulence which, in turn, cools the interior. These fins are applied around the surface of the Library's exterior, the space between them filled with different surfaces and materials depending on the elevation.

The southern elevation is merely a semi-self-sustaining wall (Fig. 7), connected to the frame of the building via concrete beams. Between the fins on this exposure, are metal sunscreens (Fig. 8), which limit the amount of direct sunlight to the top two floors. The first floor on the southern elevation, which sits atop earth kept in by a street-level masonry retaining wall, is kept shaded and cool by virtue of the façade wall's size and distance from the main building (Fig. 9). The east and west elevations are windowless, while the northern exposure is fenestrated (Fig. 10).

Most free spaces on the exterior, including those on exposed structural concrete piers, are covered in thousands of 1-inch by ½-inch glass tiles. The tiles, which appear to have been glued to some surfaces and cemented to others, come in four distinct colors: jade, blue, yellow, and a dark green, all of which are speckled with white flecks and

ribbed. The tiles are arranged in a random fashion, the result of which gives a pixilated quality to the exterior of the building (Figs. 10 – 12).

Hardwick saw fit to design a library that, if need be, could be expanded—vertically. Hardwick’s design allowed for future addition of a fourth floor, one which, with understanding of library dynamics in mind, would have been a necessity. To accommodate this potentiality, Hardwick designed the third floor to hold administrative offices set around a small open-air garden; the walls of the offices could easily be taken down and the garden stripped to accommodate the new interior. In addition, Hardwick made certain to extend the elevator and fire stair atrium to the roof, allowing for this potential fourth floor to be built with transportation access ready (Figs. 13, 14).

The transportation atrium is, in itself, a factor of significance. From the roof access to the basements the entire tube is clad in glazed brick, a fireproof material which is still within code today. At street level on the east elevation the exterior of the fire stairs and elevator is exposed, the bricks comprising it dyed and patterned into a magnificent work of public art. Ann Holloway Williams, a Jacksonville artist, was commissioned by the city to design what was the first significant integration of art into a civic building in Jacksonville. What amounts to a mural with a specific structural purpose (fireproof transportation tube) is composed of 13,000 glazed bricks in 22 distinct colors (Figs. 15, 16). Holloway entitled the mural “Momentum and Direction” and has admitted that its abstract forms symbolize man’s pursuit of knowledge, and the many paths he can blaze to achieve it⁵.

⁵ City of Jacksonville Landmark Nomination Sheet

Significance (Architect)

Taylor Hardwick's career, like those of many American architects during the 1950s and 60s, was borne of necessity and optimism. Hardwick himself was commissioned by the City of Jacksonville for several large-scale projects, including the Haydon Burns and the much-publicized Friendship Park and Fountain (Fig. 17). The latter has been altered significantly over the years and only the fountain and its immediate area remain. Both projects were key components of Mayor Haydon Burns' initiatives to revitalize the city during the Decade of Progress. Most vestiges of this period have either been demolished to make way for something newer, or heavily altered. Hardwick's library, however, had somehow escaped alteration and demolition over the years and is now recognized as Jacksonville City Landmark. Architecturally solid in concept, the Haydon Burns's status as a landmark may also be by virtue of it being the sole (untouched) survivor of the Decade of Progress.

Hardwick's mark can be seen as far south as Gainesville, Florida, where he helmed the design for Little Hall at the University of Florida. Much of his local recognition stems from somewhat kitschy roots, as he designed the famous Skinner's Dairy stores of Jacksonville. Of the 21 Skinner's Dairies built, most are still extant, though they have been adapted for uses ranging from gas stations to car washes (Fig. 18).

Obsolescence

As is the case with many library buildings, the Haydon Burns was stamped with an expiration date range; that is, all libraries have life-spans. Libraries, by their very nature, are self-consuming, insofar as the collection managers must continually acquire new

materials while retaining the old. This stratification of materials eventually exceeds the capacity of the library and much of the collection must be moved off-site. This dispersal can make it difficult for patrons to access desired materials in a timely manner, a mood which contributes to the inevitable downfall of the facilities. Moreover, information media are continually evolving and, as fate would have it, the Haydon Burns was built at the cusp of the most significant--and explosive--trend in this evolution. It is perhaps cliché to blame computers or the Internet for the downfall of the traditional library, but in this case it is accurate. The Haydon Burns was equipped in many ways for physical expansion (i.e. accommodations for added stories) but could not foresee the coming torrent of data retrieval technologies. In order to accommodate the wiring required for Internet connectivity and the space needed for dozens of computer workstations and access points, the Haydon Burns would have to have been painstakingly retrofitted, a task rarely worth the effort⁶.

Aside from its functional obsolescence, the Haydon Burns fell prey to the symptoms of Urban Decay. So few people live in downtown Jacksonville, and fewer still are usually willing to drive several miles from Jacksonville's immense, interwoven suburbs to use a library; most patrons have better access to one of the many branch libraries and cannot justify the trip. Suburban dwellers, should they make the trek to downtown Jacksonville, would find few places--if any--to park their vehicles. While downtown Jacksonville is less afflicted by street-crime than it once was, citizens are still wary of it and are reluctant to park a short distance from a destination and walk the remainder.

In the end, the Haydon Burns was replaced by a massive, 300,000-square-foot Post-Modern masterpiece. Jacksonville Main Library is to the Haydon Burns what the Haydon

⁶ *How Buildings Learn...* Stewart Brand

Burns was to its predecessor, the Carnegie Library: the latest and best the world of architecture and library design had to offer. Whether a similar fate will befall the Jacksonville Main Library is best left to imagination; advances in technology and need, foreseen or otherwise, will either nullify or amend the current edifice.

Condition

The Haydon Burns is, despite inattention and disuse, in fairly good shape. The exterior is unchanged and seems to suffer only from damage caused by benign neglect and little or no regular maintenance. Typical presentations of moisture penetration like spalling and staining make appearances throughout (Fig. 19). The xeriscaped garden behind the façade wall on the southern exposure has literally turned to dust, its plantings replaced by weeds and paths shrouded in dirt. Speckling the dirt in this former garden are hundreds of fallen glass tiles, the very same applied to much of the building. These particular tiles, fallen and partially buried, likely come from the many square plastic panels suspended from the inside of the façade-wall (Figs. 7, 11).

The most obvious points of deterioration are the bottom tips of a dozen or so of the exterior fins. Upon visual inspection, it seems the tips of these appendages succumbed to moisture penetration, which, with assistance from gravity, caused them to break off (Figs. 20, 21). While such damage sounds much direr than it truly is, if enough small breakages and spalls occur they can contribute to the aesthetic and eventual structural downfall of a building.

Outcome (for timeline of events, please see Appendix II)

After almost five years, the Haydon Burns (now called 122 Ocean) is vacant and mostly unused. Aside from its use as a venue for a monthly downtown art show, this viable space is an empty edifice with no regular maintenance. Its current owner, a sympathetic urban developer called—appropriately enough—Main Branch, LLC, has grand plans for its rehabilitation as a multi-use commercial and community space⁷ (Fig. 22), but cannot attract lessees in the current economic climate. Luckily, the building itself is officially a City of Jacksonville Landmark, recognized for its architectural and civic significance. Such designation prevents it from being demolished, but does not ensure continued and timely maintenance. The Haydon Burns can easily be called a preservation victory, and not even a pyrrhic one at that; landmark status and an owner sympathetic to its design are nothing at which to scoff. But it is a victory tempered by a recession and hampered by time, a test not met evenly by all edifices built in the Mid-Century.

⁷ Main Branch, LLC promotional website for “The Library”

Appendix I:

Figures:

Fig. 1 (00001.jpg): ¾ view of Haydon Burns, SE corner

Fig. 2 (00002.jpg): View of Carnegie Library

Fig. 3 (00003.jpg): ¾ view of Jacksonville Main Library

Fig. 4 (00004.jpg): Interior view of Haydon Burns Lib., looking from lobby to 2nd floor

Fig. 5 (00005.jpg): Angle view of street level, HB Lib., north elevation

Fig. 6 (00006.jpg): View from SE corner, HB Lib.

Fig. 7 (00007.jpg): View from inside garden, south elevation, HB Lib.

Fig. 8 (00008.jpg): Severe view of sunscreens, south elevation, HB Lib.

Fig. 9 (00009.jpg): View of south elevation, HB Lib.

Fig. 10 (00010.jpg): Severe view of fenestration, north elevation, HB Lib.

Fig. 11 (00011.jpg): View of deteriorating tile panels, south garden, HB Lib.

Fig. 12 (00012.jpg): View of tile-clad column, SE corner, HB Lib.

Fig. 13 (00013.jpg): Archival photo of HB Lib. c1970s

Fig. 14 (00014.jpg): View from inside roof garden, HB Lib.

Fig. 15 (00015.jpg): View of brick mural, east elevation, HB Lib.

Fig. 16 (00016.jpg): View of brick mural, east elevation, HB Lib.

Fig. 17 (00017.jpg): Postcard showing Friendship Fountain and Park, c1965

Fig. 18 (00018.jpg): View of Skinner's Dairy location, currently an auto repair shop

Fig. 19 (00019.jpg): Close-up of spall detected on column

Fig. 20 (00020.jpg): Close-up of damaged fin

Fig. 21 (00021.jpg): Close-up of damaged fin

Fig. 22 (00022.jpg): Promotional image, rendering of "The Library"

Appendix II:

Brief Preservation Timeline*:

- **Early 2004:** Florida Community College @ Jacksonville, in anticipation of Haydon Burns abandonment, proposes downtown campus with dedicated culinary academy. This falls through due to lack of enthusiasm and current existence of downtown campus.
- **September 2004:** Haydon Burns closes.
- **Early 2005:** City publishes call for submission, initiates bid process for development of Haydon Burns Library (122 Ocean).
- **July 2005:** City accepts bid from Atkins Group, who proposes to demolish Haydon Burns and develop high-rise residential with street-level retail
- **July 2005:** Efforts to designate Haydon Burns a city landmark underway. City Councilwoman Suzanne Jenkins, whose district includes the Haydon Burns Library, backs efforts to save the building and designate a landmark.
- **November. 2005:** Atkins Group pulls out due to financing dispute with City; bidder cries foul, citing Jenkins' efforts as unethical.
- **December 2005:** City passes bid to runner-up Petebrooke, Inc., who proposes to convert HB into chocolate factory and retail.
- **Winter 2006:** Peterbrooke pulls out citing environmental concerns and lack of need; bid passes to second runner-up, Main Branch, LLC.
- **June 2006:** Main Branch, LLC strikes deal with city to preserve site, convert to mixed-use retail and commercial
- **2007-08:** BUST!
- **2008-09:** Haydon Burns designated City Landmark, Main Branch, LLC adapts proposal and excludes added stories.

*All events gleaned from newspaper articles cited in the bibliography

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