

Face-lift completed on outside of Springs library

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The Idaho Springs Library has a new lease on life as the first phase of its restoration was completed recently. Exterior work on the 106-year-old public library included a new roof, gutters and downspouts, and brick replacement and repainting, to return it to its original 1904 look.

“Both entrances were completely demolished and then rebuilt properly,” said Phyllis Adams, who administered a grant that helped pay for the work. “We had the front doors taken off and stripped, and it turned out they are beautiful natural birch, which had unfortunately been painted over.”

Exterior work started this summer and cost more than \$200,000. The work was done with a \$124,634 grant from the State Historical Fund, a program of the Colorado Historical Society. The city of Idaho Springs, as owner of the building, put in \$10,000, and the library district was responsible for raising an additional \$73,000.

The library is a historic landmark, originally built with a \$10,000 grant from Andrew Carnegie, and is one of the few Carnegie libraries still being used as it was intended.

The building was suffering in part from water damage due to bad drainage. The structure’s exterior walls and the stairs to the main entry were crumbling. Building Restoration Specialties Inc. was hired, and it cleaned the brick and stone, replaced materials too badly deteriorated to save, and tuck-pointed the mortar joints.

“We went back to the original colors as best as we could determine regarding the trim color on the gutters and downspouts and so forth,” Adams said. “So it looks as much as possible as it did the day it opened.”

Phase two, which is still being planned, will refurbish the inside of the building. Adams said this will likely include light fixtures, painting, refinishing, woodwork — all to bring the interior back to its original look.

The second phase will probably start in the next two years. A third phase will also be done on the grounds surrounding the building.

“But that is further down the road. We had to do the outside of the building. There was no point doing anything else if you didn’t do that first,” Adams said. “The inside is going to be a much bigger project, so it’s been being talked about for a long time. Now that we have phase one finished and are feeling good about it, the library district and the local building advisory committee can talk ... with more specific ideas about what they want to have done.”

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