

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED **AUG 21 1979**
DATE ENTERED **OCT 1 1979**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Onawa Public Library

AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Iowa Avenue and 7th Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Onawa

VICINITY OF

STATE

CODE

COUNTY
Monona

CODE

Iowa

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Board of Trustees, Onawa Public Library (holder of title is City of Onawa)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Onawa

VICINITY OF

Iowa 51040

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Monona County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Onawa

Iowa

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Onawa Public Library is located along the south side of the community's main street Iowa Avenue. The building is diagonally across the avenue from the Monona County Courthouse and several blocks distant from the commercial district to the west. The library sits in the approximate center of a large expanse of lawn which in 1916-17 was developed as a park (commonly known as Library Park). The spaciousness of its setting and its strategic location near the courthouse give the building a prominence which most public libraries of comparable size lack.

The building is rectangular in outline, 63' x 43', and two stories high. It lacks the basement characteristic of small and medium sized public libraries of this period (the lecture room usually found in the library basement was at Onawa housed on the second floor) and thus the main floor is only several feet above grade.

The interior of the main floor, devoted to library services, is laid out on the "sex-partite" plan which was standard for small public libraries in the first two decades of this century. The plan is divided into ^{two} zones of three parts each. The front zone consists of center entrance vestibule and delivery lobby, with the delivery desk facing the entrance, flanked on either side by identical reading rooms, one for adults and one for children. The rear zone consists of a bookstack in the center behind the delivery desk, a small reference or study room in the southwest rear corner and the librarian's office, along with a staircase to basement and second floor (which is reached by a secondary ^{side} entrance) in the southeast rear corner. The bookstack is wider than the delivery room and connected directly to the reading rooms through doorways (open access to the book collection was almost universal policy for all except the largest public libraries from around 1900). The second floor features a large lecture room (now used for library storage) which occupies the entire front half of the floor, with a small stage at center front. At center rear is a sizeable meeting room which connects to the lecture room through a wide opening closed with four sliding doors. In the southwest corner is a small room, now used to house the library's historical collection, which, along with the meeting room, was originally at the disposal of the Onawa Women's Club for meetings and art exhibits.

The basement is excavated only under the rear half of the building, where there is a meeting room in the center and the furnace room in the southwest corner.

The exterior of the building features walls of mottled reddish-brown paving brick above a basement faced with reddish Sioux Falls granite laid as random rubble. The basement reaches to the level of the first floor window sills and is topped with a watertable of white limestone. The wide center entranceway (the entrance frame also of white limestone) curves gently upward at the center and encloses a double door (the door itself a recent replacement in aluminum-framed glass) with side- and toplights within an inner round-arched wooden frame. The double-curving profile of the door head is repeated in the entrance canopy which is suspended from the front wall on a pair of chains and shelters a shallow stoop of three steps. The corners of the building are accented with buttress piers which curve upward from the watertable and disappear into the walls near second floor level. On either side of the entrance the reading rooms are lighted by broad round-arched windows, the arches of which spring, slightly stilted, from white limestone impost blocks resting on the watertable. The brick arches are flush with the plane of the wall. The window frames are recessed and divided into three large lights by vertical mullions (the center light of each window contains operable sliding sash). The frames and sash are painted dark brown, which was probably the original color.

The same windows are found along the sides of the building on the main floor, where, however, the glazed areas are kept high to permit continuous wall shelves along the

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side walls of the reading rooms. The side windows of the reading rooms (and also the front center window of the second story and the side-and top lights of the front entrance) are glazed with colored leaded glass in a simple Prairie School design. The windows of the second story are rectangular and grouped in two's and three's. Their frames are partially arched at the upper corners. The sills, of white limestone, project slightly and the heads disappear under the widely overhanging eaves.

The tile roof is hipped, highly pitched and rises to a ridge at the top. The fascia of the eaves is studded at regular intervals with metal rings hanging from hooks. The symbolism, if any exists, of these rings, is unknown.

The decor of the interior, which is preserved largely intact, is restrained and restful. The delivery lobby which is separated from the reading rooms and bookstack by wide, segmentally-arched openings, features cream colored marble facing up to "picture rail" height. The reading rooms feature marble baseboards, continuous bookshelves (mostly original) to a height of approximately six feet, and plaster walls painted a light "institutional" green (probably original) above the shelves. The woodwork of doorframes and window frames is oak, stained dark and varnished. The round-arched windows are set within square frames which feature a curiously curved or warped intermediate framing division in the spandrel panels and small square corner blocks at the top. A flat wooden molding strip runs continuously around each reading room at the level of the top of the window frames. The ceilings have plastered beams (two in each room) running from front to rear, which are accented by thin wooden strips at the edges and thin wooden crown moldings against the ceiling. The present delivery desk is a recent replacement of the original, which was semi-octagonal in shape and is now stored in the basement. The floor of the delivery lobby and reading rooms is mosaic tile, with a black-figured border against a tan-colored ground. The floors of the reference room, bookstacks and librarian's office are covered with cork carpet. The original light fixtures have been replaced with fluorescent lights.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1908-9

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Patton and Miller, Chicago

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Onawa Public Library, its architecture highly appropriate for its purpose, deserves recognition as an exceptionally well-conceived example of early 20th century library design.

The building is the second to house Onawa's library, which was founded in 1902 when Judge Addison Oliver proposed to the city council that he would purchase the old Congregational church building to house a library, as well as donate funds for the purchase of books and fixtures, if the city would establish and maintain such an institution as a free public library. This proposition was voted upon favorably by the electorate in March 1902, and in April a board of directors was appointed. The library soon outgrew the church and in November 1906 the board approached Andrew Carnegie regarding a new building. Carnegie offered \$10,000 for this purpose in December 1907, subject to the usual conditions that the city secure a suitable site and agree to appropriate annually ten percent of the grant amount for maintenance. Judge Oliver offered an additional \$10,000 for the building (along with another \$10,000 as a permanent endowment fund) and Onawa was able to erect a much more substantial building than most comparable towns, with only Carnegie funds at their disposal, could afford.

The building was designed by Norman S. Patton and Grant C. Miller, Chicago architects, and erected between October 1908 and October 1909. Patton and Miller specialized in library architecture and the Onawa library is one of at least 20 which they designed in Iowa between 1900 and 1915. The Onawa library is among the best of their Iowa libraries and is certainly the most original. The firm designed libraries in a variety of styles which range from the elegant French classical of Webster City (1904), Mason City (1903-4), or Clinton (1903-4) to the English late medieval or Tudor of Monticello (1903-4), Spencer (1904) or Marengo (1905). Onawa is their only Iowa library which is unmistakably Prairie School in style.

The use of the Prairie School style may be seen as particularly appropriate for a library building of this period. Librarians and library planners of the early 20th century were extremely vocal about matters of library architecture and were concerned that provision for efficient and economical library service be the first consideration in library design. They demanded buildings which were modest and unassuming in style, with no distracting ornament and in which qualities of openness and warmth would entice people to enter the library and once inside, make them feel at home. The Prairie Style, with its emphasis on elemental geometric forms and massing and its straightforward reliance on the inherent qualities of materials to achieve architectural effect would seem to have been well suited to meet such demands. In the Onawa library the style has been used to particularly good purpose. The wide front windows open the interior to view, the earthbound stoop suggests ease of entry and the building, in scale, proportion and fenestration, strikes a note of comfortable domesticity. The library

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9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The Onawa Sentinel, 21 April 1921.
 Clipping from unidentified Sioux City newspaper, 5 September 1909.
 The Onawa library has in its possession certain early records pertaining to its history. These include minutes of meetings of the board of trustees, correspondence regarding the construction of the building and other miscellaneous material. The library also possesses a partial set of blueprints of the architect's drawings for the library.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approx. 1

QUADRANGLE NAME Onawa

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 14 740610 4656570
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The land known locally as "Library Park" consists of approximately the western 2/3 of Block 78, and includes all of Lots 1 through 5, all of Lots 24 through 28, and part of Lots 6 through 23, all in Block 78, Onawa, Monona Co. Iowa

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

S.J. Klingensmith, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Division of Historic Preservation

DATE

July 1979

STREET & NUMBER

26 East Market Street

TELEPHONE

319/353-6949

CITY OR TOWN

Iowa City

STATE

Iowa 52240

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE X

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Adrian A. Anderson

TITLE

Director, Division of Historic Preservation

DATE

8/10/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

John Neal Shuck

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 10-1-79

ATTEST:

William H. Braucham

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 9.27.79

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bears comparison with contemporary houses designed by George W. Maher, such as the Schultz house in Winnetka, Ill. (1907) and the Erwin house in Oak Park (1905), both of which are similar to the library in scale and massing, with their hipped roofs, overhanging eaves and windows grouped into pairs and distributed evenly over the front facade.