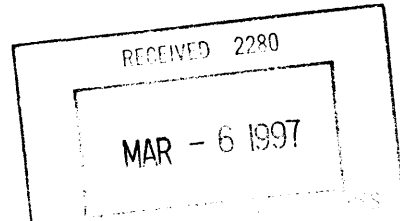


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Curtis, John B., Free Public Library

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number Northeast Corner of Junction of Routes 11 and 221 N/A not for publication

city or town Bradford N/A vicinity

state Maine code ME county Penobscot code 019 zip code 04410

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*James S. Hertzberg* 3/1/97  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

for Signature of the Keeper 4-14-97 Date of Action

*Richard Savage*

Curtis, John B., Free Public Library  
Name of Property

Penobscot, Maine  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Maine Public Libraries

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Education/Library

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Education/Library

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Neo-Classical Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone/Granite

walls Brick

roof Metal/Copper

other

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Education

Period of Significance

1915-1947

Significant Dates

1915

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Stevens, John Calvin, and

Stevens, John Howard

Primary location of additional data:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** Less Than 1

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	19	504970	4990220
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Kirk F. Mohney, Architectural Historian

organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date January, 1997

street & number 55 Capitol Street, 65 State House Station telephone 207/287-2132

city or town Augusta, state Maine zip code 04333-0065

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

CURTIS, JOHN B., FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

PENOBSCOT COUNTY, MAINE

Section number 7 Page 2

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The John B. Curtis Free Public Library is a one-story Neo-Classical Revival style brick building that rests on a high granite block foundation. Its combination of gable front orientation, monumental front granite steps, and high platform impart an image of a classical temple. The library stands at one end of the small village center of Bradford.

Facing west, the library's symmetrically composed three-bay front elevation contains a centrally placed doorway flanked by six-over-six double hung sash windows. The doorway, which projects slightly from the end wall, is comprised of a six-panel door surmounted by a semi-circular fanlight. Its enframing features pilasters with Ionic capitals that support paneled impost blocks and a broad cornice. Slightly above the doorway is a rectangular stone plaque bearing the inscription "The John B. Curtis Free Library." Other important details on the facade are the keystones above the two windows (these appear above all but two ell windows), a stringcourse that extends around the building below the granite window sills, rectangular panels between the stringcourse and the granite basement, short cornice returns, and the original wrought iron stair railing which flares at the base (matching the broader width of the stairs).

The south side elevation features a trio of symmetrically placed windows consisting of a pair of six-over-sixes framing a central six-over-six with four-pane sidelights. Here, the decorative panels appear below the outer windows only. There are two fixed six-pane windows at the basement level located on axis with the six-over-sixes. The slightly recessed ell has a single six-over-six and a basement level window. On the north side there are five symmetrically placed six pane windows and three basement windows (located below the outermost and middle windows). Panels appear in the bays with both upper and lower windows. There are no openings in the ell wall. At the rear of the ell is a doorway to the basement and a six-over-six window above. A single interior end chimney punctuates the copper sheathed roof at the rear of the main block.

Inside, the library has one large room in the main block and a small room and stairs to the basement in the ell. At the entrance end of the interior is a vestibule that is flanked by segmentally arched alcoves corresponding to the window locations. A fanlight identical to the one over the main door is positioned above a six-panel door in the vestibule. Opposite the entrance is a fireplace with a Colonial Revival style mantelpiece comprised of eared surrounds and a shelf supported by corner blocks and scroll end brackets. Arches similar to those framing the vestibule are located above the doors that lead to the stairs at the northeast corner and the original office at the southeast corner. Narrow tongue and groove wainscot carries around the room. The wainscot and door and window trim are varnished. The only interior alteration is the acoustical tile ceiling that has been suspended from the original plaster over lath ceiling. Still extant above the tiles are the original lighting fixtures, now replaced with florescent lights.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

CURTIS, JOHN B., FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

PENOBSCOT COUNTY, MAINE

Section number   7   Page   3  

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An account of the library's dedication which appeared in the April 1, 1915, edition of the *Bangor Daily News* noted that the building "...is of grey brick construction with Deer Isle [Maine] trimmings, copper roof and built in the most substantial manner to stand for many years."

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

CURTIS, JOHN B., FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

PENOBSCOT COUNTY, MAINE

Section number 8 Page 2

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Designed by the Portland architectural firm of John Calvin Stevens and John Howard Stevens and constructed in 1914-15, the John B. Curtis Free Public Library is a distinctive one-story brick building which evokes the image of a classical temple. The building was given to the library association by John Bacon Curtis, a native son who prospered in a variety of business ventures in Bangor, Portland and later Nebraska. The library is eligible for nomination to the Register under Criterion A and C as more fully discussed in the Multiple Property Documentation Form titled "Maine Public Libraries."

The library's donor, John Bacon Curtis (1827-1897), was born in Hampden, Maine, but his family moved to Bradford during his childhood. He subsequently joined his father in the lumbering business during which time they conceived the idea of manufacturing spruce gum. In 1848 the family once again relocated, this time to Bangor where they continued to produce gum. At this time, John B. Curtis was principally involved in the marketing of their product through traveling sales. Recognizing the value of locating their business in proximity to rail connections, the Curtises moved to Portland about 1850 where they established the firm of Curtis & Son. Sometime thereafter, John B. Curtis is said to have invented a machine that greatly facilitated the process of shaping, wrapping, and packing the gum. After his father's death in 1869, Curtis broadened his business activities and for a time was involved in shipbuilding, and later established a steamship line to serve the islands of Casco Bay. In 1880 he ventured to Texas and then Nebraska where he purchased a large farm. He is also said to have had business dealings elsewhere in the country. At the time of his death, however, Curtis was residing in the Portland suburb of Deering.

In his will, Curtis left \$20,000 for the construction of a library building in the Town of Bradford. Of this amount, \$12,000 was designated for the building itself and the balance for an endowment to support the library. Nearly seventeen years elapsed between Curtis' death and the erection of the building, a fact that is apparently explained in part by the delay in forming a library association to receive and maintain the bequest. In a letter dated February 11, 1913, Leander H. Fobes (a trustee of Curtis' estate) wrote to Thomas H. Wentworth in Bradford to inquire as to whether anyone locally could prepare a plan for the library as well as build it. Fobes' wrote, in part:

In these small towns you sometimes find people that can turn their hands to anything, a kind of natural genius. I was thinking that you might have some one of that kind in your town that could make a plan for a building for us. Have you any one there that could take a contract to build or would we have to go to Bangor for a builder?

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

CURTIS, JOHN B., FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

PENOBSCOT COUNTY, MAINE

Section number 8 Page 3

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Ultimately, however, Maine's most prominent architectural firm was selected to design the library, and the Bangor contractor Otto Nelson was given the building contract. The trustees' records of expenses as reported to the Probate Court indicate that John Calvin Stevens was paid \$552.61 for plans and that the construction costs amounted to just over \$8,000. In addition, \$100.00 was paid to Helen V. Gerrity, a professional librarian, to catalogue the nearly 3,000 books that comprised the original collection. The library was dedicated on March 31, 1915.

The Bradford project was the fourth library building designed by the Stevens firm, although John Calvin Stevens himself had previously designed three others. Like all of the Stevens libraries, the one in Bradford is a very distinctive building unlike any others in the state. Its classical temple form in particular sets the Curtis library apart from others built in this period.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

CURTIS, JOHN B., FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

PENOBSCOT COUNTY, MAINE

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Bacon, George F. *Portland: Its Representative Business Men and Its Points of Interest*.  
Newark, N.J.: Glenwood Publishing Company. 1891.

“Bradford’s New Library Dedicated.” *Bangor Daily News*. April 1, 1915.

Leander W. Fobes to Thomas H. Wentworth. February 11, 1913. John B. Curtis Free Public  
Library, Bradford. Copy on file at the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Augusta.

The Third Account of Lamartine J. Fobes and Leon M. Fobes, Trustees under the last Will  
and Testament of John B. Curtis. April 6, 1917. Cumberland County Probate Court, Portland.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

CURTIS, JOHN B. FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

PENOBSCOT COUNTY, MAINE

Section number 10 Page 2

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The nominated property occupies the Town of Bradford tax map 13, lot 21.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundary embraces the entire village lot historically associated with the John B. Curtis Free Public Library.