

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

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received JUL 28 1987

date entered AUG 27 1987

**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 Conant Public Library

and/or common Conant Public Library

2. Location

street & number Main Street N/A not for publication

city, town Winchester N/A vicinity of

state New Hampshire code 33 county Cheshire code 005

3. 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Winchester

street & number Winchester Town Hall, Main Street

city, town Winchester N/A vicinity of state New Hampshire 03470

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cheshire County Registry of Deeds (Vol. 292, Page 45)
Cheshire County Courthouse

street & number 12 Court Street

city, town Keene state New Hampshire 03431

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

A Survey of Public Libraries in
title Cheshire County, New Hampshire has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1982 federal state county local

depository for survey records New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources

city, town Concord state New Hampshire 03301

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

Check one

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved

date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Conant Public Library is a brick Romanesque Revival public library building, which stands on its own lot on the southeast side of Main Street (Routes 10 and 119) in the village of Winchester. (As there are no other structures on the property, this nomination contains only one contributing building.) The two and a half story main block, with its high basement and gabled hip roof, has a shallow two and a half story, gable roofed entry pavilion projecting from the center of its Main Street (northwest) facade. To the rear (southeast) of the main block is the hip roofed stack wing, which appears from the exterior to be two stories high with a high basement. (The second stack level has, however, never been built.) At the south corner of the main block and the stack wing is found the two story, circular stair tower, with its steep conical roof.

The four sections of the building share many features. With the exception of the circular stair tower, whose brick walls are laid in flemish bond, the building's brick walls are laid in common bond, flemish variation. The four sections all share the same high brick basement, laid on a base course of roughly cut granite blocks and topped by a smooth dressed light granite watertable. The wooden framed basement windows all use the granite base course as their sills and the granite watertable as their lintels. Similar decorative features, notably courses of buff bricks in the red brick walls, semicircular arches with alternating red and buff bricks, and narrow, slot-like panels high in the brick walls, unify the building. All four sections are covered by slate roofs with copper ridge mouldings on their horizontal ridges.

The windows of the three public facades of the main block are all similar in design. The semicircular arched windows all have one over one sash windows, six pane fanlights filled with colored glass, moulded wooden frames, and brick arches built with smooth granite impost blocks and alternating red and buff bricks, save on the top of the arch, where abutting buff bricks suggest a "keystone". (The windows are now covered by modern metal framed storm windows.) Where joined in pairs or trios, the windows have abutting sills and arches, and share their granite impost blocks. The main block's red brick walls are enlivened by courses of buff bricks in bands at the window sill and impost levels. The two courses of buff bricks in each band are separated by a single course of red bricks in the sill bands, and by two courses of red bricks in the impost bands. Above the highest buff brick band are found the narrow slot-like recessed panels. The main block cornice has two parts, a lower five course brick cornice, with two lower courses of dentiled headers and three upper progressively overhanging courses. An upper moulded metal cornice completes the cornice. The gabled hip roof has two small gables, on the northeast and the southwest, which are completely filled by wide slat louvers and trimmed by close moulded cornices. The horizontal roof ridge is covered by a copper moulding, which is decorated by billets and by scrolled terminations at each end. The roof is broken by two dormers and a chimney. The identical brick fronted dormers, one on each side (northeast and southwest) slope, each have a semicircular arched, one over one sash window with arched upper sash, moulded wooden frame, and a brick arch with alternating red

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and buff bricks and granite impost blocks (which are continued to the corners of the brick front). Each red brick front is decorated by a smooth granite base course (which also functions as the window sill), two slot-like panels to each side of the window, and a gable parapet, whose smooth granite coping has gable springers and a decorative apex stone with a simple patera. The dormers' sides and roofs are sheathed with slate and trimmed by close wooden eaves. On the northeast slope (to the rear of the dormer) is found a tall, wide brick chimney, decorated by vertically laid bricks and a corbeled cap. (A similar chimney once stood in a corresponding position on the southwest slope.)

A description of the Main Street facade must begin with its central feature, the one bay wide entry pavilion; so we will depart briefly from our description of the main block. The entry pavilion, which projects only three feet from the street facade of the main block, does share some features with the main block, notably the high basement with its granite base course and watertable, and three of the four buff and red brick bands. (The first story impost level band is not continued around the pavilion.) The narrow side facades are topped by the same cornice that appears on the main block. The side facades are windowless, their only distinctive feature being two narrow slot-like panels found between the upper buff band and the cornice in each facade. Wide granite steps, with a central metal pipe rail and granite sidewalls composed of impressive solid blocks, serve the recessed entry in the street facade. The wide outer semicircular arch of the entry has granite impost blocks, alternating pairs of buff and red bricks, the usual "keystone" of buff bricks, and an outer moulding of specially moulded bricks. The outer moulding is terminated on the impost blocks by a carved granite spiral around a carved rosette. (The course of granite blocks at the impost level is continued around the entire pavilion.) The arch's tympanum is filled by an open wooden screen, supported by carved granite corbels on the sides of the impost blocks. The tympanum screen has a plain outer frame, but an elaborate infill composed of globes and spindles arranged in a square pattern, with the globes at the corners of the squares and the spindles connecting the globes. The recess itself, wider than the outer arch, is six-sided in shape, as the inner corners were "cut off" on the diagonal. The recess has a marble floor of square dark and light tiles arranged in a checkerboard pattern, and a beaded board ceiling. The recess's brick walls are set on a granite sill (actually a continuation of the watertable) and are ornamented by a continuation of the buff and red brick band that marks the first story window sill level, and by a new band of two buff brick courses separated by two red brick courses at the impost level of the recess's window and door arches. The main entry itself, in the rear wall of the recess, is large double doors, decorated by panels, mouldings, and small patera, and each containing a large single pane window and an upper fifteen pane window, both with moulded trim. Above the doors (now covered by modern metal frames storm doors) is a large, six pane fanlight

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of colored glass. The main entry has a moulded wooden frame, a granite sill, and a red brick semicircular arch. The angled inner corners of the recess each feature a window similar to the main block's public windows, with one over one sash, modern metal framed storm window, a six pane fanlight of colored glass, a moulded wooden frame, a granite sill, and a semicircular arch of alternating buff and red bricks (but no impost blocks or buff "keystone").

In the second story of the pavilion, above the recessed entry, is a large, wide, quadruple window beneath a segmental arch of the usual alternating buff and red bricks. The four one over one sash windows, each topped by a single pane transom window, and covered by a modern storm window, share a moulded outer wooden frame and a granite sill. (The second story buff brick bands are found at the level of the granite sill and the wooden lintel of the sash windows.) To each side of the quadruple window's segmental arch are found two narrow slot-like panels. The segmental arch is topped by a smooth granite course which crosses the entire facade and terminates at the ends as slightly projecting granite corbels which support the tall smooth granite gable springers. In the brick wall above this granite course are set granite title and date blocks, whose raised letters read "CONANT LIBRARY." and "1890". Above the title block, another smooth granite course crosses the facade between the gable springers. Set on this granite course are the two one over one sash gable windows, whose granite lintels are continued as another smooth granite course across the gable. Above the windows and their lintel course, the apex of the gable is filled by decorative terra cotta plaques with floral and geometric designs. The gable parapet is crowned by a smooth moulded granite coping with the already mentioned gable springers and an apex stone topped by a turned granite finial. The parapet hides the pavilion's slate sheathed gable roof with its copper ridge moulding.

The entry bay forms the central bay of the building's three bay Main Street facade. The side bays on the main block are identical, each having paired windows with abutting arches and sills, of the type already described, in both stories. The second story windows differ only in being shorter than the first story windows. Beneath each first story window, a two pane window is found in the basement. The facade is completed by slot-like panels above the upper brick band, two on the inner sides, between the windows and the entry pavilion, and three on the outer sides between the windows and the corners. The two bay northeast side facade continues the same pattern, with a group of three abutting, arched windows in both stories of the western bay (towards the street) and one arched window in both stories of the eastern (rear) bay. Four two pane basement windows correspond to the windows above them. And the usual slot-like panels appear above the upper brick band, five between the western windows and the street

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corner, six between the windows, and four between the eastern window and the rear corner. The two bay southwest side facade again has three abutting arched windows in both stories of the western bay, with three corresponding two pane basement windows beneath them. The rear bay contains the side entry (now closed), which is served by granite steps with granite sidewalls composed of large solid single blocks. The semicircular arched entry is recessed, with a granite floor and brick sidewalls, decorated by the usual brick bands. The double wooden framed doors, with single pane builtin windows, are decorated by panels, mouldings and patera, but are somewhat obscured by modern metal framed storm doors. Above the doors, the arch is filled by a wooden insert, which projects over the doors almost to the facade. The underside of the wooden insert is sheathed with beaded boarding, while the outer side is decorated by four moulded panels. The brick semicircular arch has the usual granite impost blocks, alternating red and buff bricks, and a buff brick "keystone". Above the side entry, the east bay contains another pair of abutting arched windows of the usual design. Five slot-like panels appear between the western windows and the street corner, and four more appear between the windows. The main block's rear (southeast) facade is exposed only to the north of the rear stack wing. It can boast only two distinctive features, eleven slot-like panels above the upper brick band, and one main level window, a narrow one over one sash window with moulded window frame, granite sill and lintel, which butts up against the northeast wall of the stack wing.

The circular stair tower covers the rear facade of the main block to the south of the stack wing and projects beyond the main block to the south. As noted, the brick basement and upper walls are laid in flemish bond. The tower does have the same granite basement sillcourse and water-table and the same cornice as the main block. The cornice is continuous with the main block cornice, as the walls of the two sections are of the same height. Two small single pane windows are found in the basement. The four bays of the first and second stories each contain a tall, narrow, semicircular arched window, with one over one sash, arched upper sash, moulded wooden frame, modern storm window, granite sill, and brick arch with granite impost blocks, alternating buff and red bricks, and the typical buff brick "keystone". While the upper story windows are all found at the same level, the main level windows are staggered around the tower, rising from west to east as they follow the tower stairs. The arched windows are joined at the sill and impost levels in both stories by the usual brick bands of two buff brick courses separated by a single course of red bricks (or two courses of red bricks in the upper impost level band). The bands connecting the staggered lower windows are themselves stepped through the use of square smooth granite blocks, which act as end points and as turning points. The band runs horizontally from a window to a granite block halfway between the windows, then turns and rises vertically to another granite block at the level of the upper window, then

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turns again and runs horizontally to the upper window. Above the upper impost level band, two slot-like panels are found between each pair of windows. The steep, tall, slate sheathed conical roof is crowned by a tall ornate copper finial.

The rear stack wing has the same brick walls and basement with granite sill and watertable as the main block. However, on the rear (southeast) end, the basement level is fully exposed, revealing the rough stone foundation beneath the granite block sill course. The slate sheathed hip roof is trimmed by a somewhat different cornice. The upper moulded metal cornice is like that found on the main block and the stair tower. But, the lower brick portion of the cornice consists of one course of dentiled headers beneath four progressively overhanging courses. The southwest and northeast side facades are similar in design, differing only in the westernmost bay, which is covered on the southwest side by the stair tower, leaving seven exposed bays on that facade. The side facades are distinguished by tall, two story high, semicircular arches which incorporate the windows of both levels, the lower one over one sash windows and the upper one over one sash windows with two pane transom windows filling the tympanums of the arches. The tall arches have granite sills and brick arches with granite impost blocks and alternating red and buff bricks. The granite lintel of the lower window and the granite sill of the upper window are recessed slightly into the arch and are separated by a row of five decorative terra cotta plaques with floral and geometric designs. The westernmost bay of the eight bay northeast facade contains two joined arches of the same design, with abutting arches and sills and a shared impost block. A two pane window appears in the basement beneath each arch (save for the westernmost southwestern arch). And the arches are connected by the usual brick bands (two buff brick courses separated by a single red brick course) at both the sill and impost levels. (The slot like panels found on the main block, pavilion, and tower do not appear on the rear wing.) The rear southeast facade has openings only in the center. The basement boasts a central door of vertical beveled boarding (a recent replacement) with plain wooden frame and concrete sill, beneath the granite watertable, which serves as the door lintel. The basement door is now sheltered by a gabled hood, which is supported by brackets with curved braces and decoratively sawn ends. The hood has a plywood ceiling, pedimented cornice with mouldings and frieze, a flush boarded gable, and a slate sheathed gable roof. In the center of the main and upper levels of the one bay rear facade is a tall arch with a granite sill and a semicircular arch with granite impost blocks and alternating red and buff bricks. The two story high arch again incorporates two windows, a lower two over two sash window and an upper two over two sash window with a six pane fanlight in the tympanum. The two windows are separated by a slightly recessed, horizontal granite block which serves as both sill and lintel. The buff and red brick bands of the side facades

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are continued across the rear facade to the central arch. The sill band is horizontal across the facade. But, as the rear facade arch is shorter than the side facade arches, the impost level band is bent on each side halfway between the corner and the arch. The band then descends vertically to the rear arch's impost level, then continues horizontally to the arch's impost blocks.

The layout of the main level of the building is basically symmetrical. On the main northwest-southeast axis are found three progressively larger spaces. The main entry opens into the entry hall in the front portion of the main block. The entry hall in turn opens, through doors, into the wider checkout area in the rear portion of the main block. The checkout area, which has no rear (southeast) wall, opens into the stack area which occupies the entire rear wing. In the front corners of the main block flanking the entry hall are two reading rooms, the reference room to the northeast, the children's room to the southwest. In the rear corners of the main block flanking the checkout area are smaller spaces, with the former side entry hall, now a workroom, to the southwest. The area to the northeast of the checkout area is divided into two spaces, a restroom, opening off the reference room, in the actual east corner, and a librarian's office, opening off the checkout area, to the southwest of the restroom. The circular stair tower is devoted to the stairs which descend to the basement and rise to the south corner of the main block's second story. In the main block's second story, a long wide hallway leads along the rear (southeast) side from the stairs to a small storage room in the east corner. Opening off the hallway are the two rooms (now used for a history museum) which occupy most of the upper level, an almost square room in the west corner, and a larger room occupying the central portion and the north corner.

The public spaces all have fine hardwood floors, save for the restroom which now has a modern linoleum floor. The walls are plastered with either moulded baseboards or wainscoting. The high ceilings are usually plastered. The door and window frames are quite consistent throughout the rooms, all having the same mouldings and similar cornerblocks. The door frames and those window frames that reach to the floor have plain lower cornerblocks. The door frames and the rectangular window frames have patera in their square upper cornerblocks. The same patera appear in the square "impost blocks" and "keystones" of the arched window frames.

The entry hall has plaster walls with moulded baseboards, and a high plaster ceiling with ceiling moulding and a modern light fixture. At the street (northwest) end are the already described main entry doors in the usual frame. Similar frames surround the double five panel doors at the southeast end of the hall which open into the checkout area, and the now

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closed doors in the side walls, to the children's room on the southwest and to the reference room on the northeast. The children's room door has been replaced by a glass case housing a bird collection, while the reference room door has been hidden by bookshelves. The double doors into the check-out area still retain their panels decorated with mouldings, raised fields, and chamfered edges.

The checkout area is a six sided space, as the street side corners have been "cut off" on the diagonal for the doorways into the children's room and the reference room. The area has plaster walls with moulded baseboards and a high plaster ceiling with ceiling moulding and hanging light fixtures. The usual frames grace the doors in the windowless checkout area. The double doors to the entry hall in the northwest wall have been described. The wide doorways to the children's room in the west wall and to the reference room in the north wall are now doorless. The northeast and southwest walls each have an eight panel door, ornamented with mouldings and chamfered edges, a door to the librarian's office on the northeast and a door to the workroom (the former side entry hall) on the southeast. The checkout area has no southeast wall, but opens directly into the stack area. This opening was once almost filled by the original librarian's desk. But, that desk has been removed and replaced by a modern desk on the southwest side of the checkout area.

The children's room and the reference room are virtually mirror images of each other. Both have the same six-sided shape, as the corners facing the checkout area and the outer recessed entry have been "cut off" at the diagonal. Both rooms have the same plaster walls with the same paneled wainscoating, ornamented with large lower panels, smaller upper panels with patera, moulded baseboards and rails. And both rooms have the same high plaster ceilings with ceiling mouldings. Each room is lit by two abutting arched windows in the street (northwest) wall, by three abutting arched windows in the outer side wall (the northeast wall in the reference room and the southwest wall in the children's room), and by one arched window looking into the recessed entry in the diagonal street corner wall (the west or the north wall). These windows all have one over one sash, six pane fanlights of colored glass, and arched frames which descend to the floor and enclose a panel beneath each window. Each room has a wide doorless opening with the usual frame into the checkout area in the diagonal inner corner wall (the south or the east wall). The frames of the doors into the entry hall can still be seen in the inner side (southwest or northeast) walls, and part of the original paneled door can still be seen behind the bookcases in the reference room. The rooms do differ in their rear (southeast) walls, although both walls have similar chimney and fireplace projections. The children's room has a simpler projection, brick in the lower section, but plastered above. The fireplace is a simple segmental arched brick fireplace with brick inner hearth and slate outer hearth. The

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reference room has a similar projection and a similar fireplace, but here the segmental arched fireplace is given an elaborate wooden frame. The fireplace is flanked by two turned colonettes with bases, each supporting a dossier with paneled faces beneath the moulded mantelshelf. Paneling is also found beneath the mantelshelf, between the projecting dossiers. Above the mantelshelf is a large mirror with moulding frame, flanked by panels. In front of the flanking panels stand smaller turned colonettes which support a projecting moulded cornice above the mirror. To the north of the fireplace in the reference room is found a tall, eight panel door with the usual frame, which serves the restroom.

The restroom, as already noted, has a linoleum floor, besides the expected fixtures, the usual plaster walls with moulded baseboards, and a high plaster ceiling. Typical moulded frames surround the door to the reference room in the northwest wall and the arched one over one sash window with six pane fanlight in the northeast wall. The restroom is a five sided space, as the south corner has been "cut off" on the diagonal. The reason for this angled wall can be seen in the adjoining librarian's office, also a five sided space, whose northeast wall was bent and angled to reach a narrow one over one sash window in the rear (southeast) wall of the main block. The small office has a hardwood floor, plaster walls with moulded baseboards, a high plaster ceiling, and the usual frames around the window and the eight panel door to the checkout area in the southwest wall.

The side entry hall's plaster walls have vertical beaded board wainscoating with moulded baseboards and rails. A light fixture hangs from the high plaster ceiling. The southwest end of the small space features the double side entry doors, already described, which have a typical rectangular frame. However, when the side entry hall became a workroom, the doors were closed off, by an insulated partition built over the lower sections of the doors, beneath their builtin windows. The usual door frames also surround the eight panel door to the checkout area in the northeast wall and a now doorless opening in the southeast wall to the rear stack wing. Another opening in the southeast wall, a short passageway to the stair tower, which has plaster walls with the same wainscoating and a segmental arched plaster ceiling, has been closed off on the stair tower side and turned into a recess for the large library safe.

The rear wing was designed to eventually hold two levels of stacks, but the upper level was left unbuilt to await future expansion and still remains unbuilt. So, today the stack wing is essentially one large, two story high room. Its plaster walls have beaded board wainscoating with moulded baseboards and rails. The high ceiling, flat in the center and pitched on three sides (the northeast, southeast and southwest) is sheathed with beaded boarding, trimmed by a simple ceiling moulding, and supported

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by four trusses, essentially queenpost trusses, although the upper parts of the rafters are hidden by the flat portion of the ceiling. (A fifth truss is half embedded in the northwest wall.) The tiebeams, collarbeams, and visible portions of the rafters are square timbers ornamented only by chamfered edges. But, the two queenposts in each truss are decoratively turned posts with squared ends. The northwest (street) wall has a wide, untrimmed, central opening into the checkout area and the now doorless opening, with the usual moulded frame, to the side entry hall, in the lower level. Above the checkout area opening and set on the tiebeam of the embedded truss, was a wide semicircular opening into the second story hallway of the main block. This opening was later closed and decorated by narrow boards radiating from a semicircular hub set on the center of the tiebeam. The northeast and southwest side walls both feature two levels of windows. The lower rectangular windows are one over one sash windows, with moulded frames that extend down to the floor through the wainscoating and are decorated by plain lower cornerblocks and upper cornerblocks with patera. The upper windows, intended to light the second stack level, are arched windows with one over one sash beneath two pane windows in the tympanums, surrounded by moulded frames with patera in the "impost blocks" and "keystones". The nine bays of the northeast wall and the seven east bays of the eight bay southwest wall all contain the two levels of windows. The westernmost bay of the southwest wall features a door to the stair tower in each level, both with the typical frame. The lower eight panel door is now in use; but the upper four panel door, which, if not nailed shut, would open into emptiness, awaits the construction of the second stack level. In the center of the southeast end wall is a tall, two story high, semicircular arched frame encompassing a lower two over two sash window and an upper two over two sash window with a six pane fanlight of colored glass, and descending through the wainscoating to the floor. The moulded frame's lower cornerblocks are plain, but the blocks at the ends of the lower window's moulded lintel, as well as the "impost blocks" and the "keystone", all have patera. The stack area still contains the original wooden bookcases, with their paneled ends and moulded cornices. The bookcases, seven on each side, are divided by a central aisle, ending at the arched southeastern windows.

The two story high stair tower has an unusual shape, that of a circle with one quadrant replaced by a rectangular corner, here the north corner that fits into the angle of the main block and the rear wing. The tower has the usual hardwood floors, a high flat plaster ceiling, and plaster walls with vertical beaded board wainscoating trimmed by moulded baseboards and rails. Similar bead boarding with moulded baseboard is found on the inner side of the circular stairway that rises along the outer wall to the upper landing in the right angled north corner. In the lower level are found two eight panel doors with the usual frames, one into the stack area in the northeast wall, and one to the southeast for the basement stairs beneath the

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main stairway. The northwest wall has a shallow projection, built of plasterboard with plain baseboards and a picture moulding, marking the site of the former passageway to the side entry hall. The wooden stairs curve around three-quarters of the tower. The stairs and the upper landing share a curving balustrade with turned balusters and a heavy moulded rail. The turned newelpost at the foot of the stairs supports a colonette, which, in turn, supports the upper landing, and the turned post at the corner of the upper landing. The wainscoating follows the stairs as they rise. The windows, four lower windows along the stairway, and four upper windows high in the walls, are arched one over one sash windows set in rectangular moulded frames with patera in their upper cornerblocks. In the northeast wall of the upper landing is found the four panel door, with a typical frame, which waits to serve the upper stack level. An opening in the landing's northwest wall (the main block's rear wall) serves a short flight of steps up into the second story hallway. Flanked by plaster walls with the same beaded board wainscoating found in the tower, this short flight is actually included in the hallway and is protected by a balustrade similar in design to the stair tower balustrade, but with turned end posts.

The second story hall has plaster walls with a high picture moulding and vertical beaded board wainscoating trimmed by moulded baseboards and rails. The high plaster ceiling has hanging light fixtures and a simply framed, beaded board trapdoor to the unfinished and unused attic. At the southwest stairway end of the hall are found two abutting semicircular arched windows with one over one sash, six pane fanlights, and typical moulded frames with "impost blocks" and "keystones", which extend down through the wainscoating to the floor. In the southeast wall is the former opening that overlooked the stack wing, in a shallow, semicircular arched recess, which has the same beaded board wainscoating and a plaster ceiling. The composition board that fills the former opening is ornamented by the same design of narrow boards radiating from a semicircular hub as now appears on the other side of the closed opening. The usual frames surround a four panel door to the small historical room, and double sliding, four paneled doors to the larger historical room (all in the northwest wall), and another four panel door to the small storage room (in the northeast wall). The storage room has plaster walls with moulded baseboards, a high plaster ceiling, the already mentioned door to the hall (with the typical frame), and a single northeastern window, an arched window with one over one sash, six pane fanlight, and usual moulded frame, which reaches to the floor and encloses a panel beneath the window.

Both historical rooms have hardwood floors, plaster walls with moulded baseboards and high picture mouldings, and plaster ceilings with modern hanging light fixtures. The smaller historical room (originally designated as the trustees' room) is lit by two abutting arched windows in the northwest

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(street) wall and by three abutting arched windows in the southwest wall. All have one over one sash, six pane fanlights, panels beneath each window, and the typical moulded frames reaching to the floor. The usual moulded frame graces the three doors, a four panel door to the hallway in the south-east wall, another four panel door to the larger historical room in the northeast wall, and a narrow two panel door to a small closet in the north-west wall. (The closet occupies part of the entry pavilion's projection.) The southeast wall boasts a projecting fireplace-chimney breast, like the one in the children's room, with brick lower section, plastered upper walls, and a segmental arched brick fireplace with brick inner hearth and slate outer hearth. The large historical room (originally intended for a natural history museum) has many of the features of the small historical room, the same fireplace-chimney breast projection in the southeast wall, and arched windows of the same design, two abutting windows in the northwest (street) wall and three abutting windows in the northeast wall. The northwest wall also has a shallow recess, a portion of the entry pavilion projection, which contains the wide segmental arched quadruple window with one over one sash beneath single pane transom windows. The moulded window frame, with the usual plain lower cornerblocks, as well as "impost blocks" and "keystone" with patera, reaches to the floor and encompasses a long panel beneath the window. The usual frames also appear around the southwest door to the other historical room and the southeastern double sliding doors to the hallway.

The basement stairs under the main stairs in the stair tower have board steps and risers that curve along the exposed brick outer wall and the board inner wall to the small tower basement, which, like most of the rest of the basement, has a concrete floor, brick and stone walls, and an unfinished ceiling with exposed joists. Segmental arched openings, one in the northwest wall and one in the northeast wall, lead into the main basement. The main block and the rear wing share a T-shaped basement, as, save for two short side walls projecting slightly into the space at the junction of the two sections, the basement is one continuous space. Part of the main block basement still has a dirt floor. Two rows of brick piers supporting the floor beams march down the main portion of the basement from the northwest to the southeast. Four more brick piers and the large solid brick bases of the fireplaces are found in the main block basement. The brick and stone walls that support the recessed entry's brick walls create a corresponding six sided room beneath the entry, which has a dirt floor and a ceiling of two shallow brick arches.

The library is surrounded by flat lawns, but to the rear of the stack wing, the land drops abruptly about four feet. A wide concrete walk leads from the sidewalk along Main Street to the main entry steps. The only tree, a tall evergreen, stands to the north of the walk. The southwest lawn is bounded by a hedge on two sides, the southwest border shared with an adjoining park, and along the rear edge, where the land drops away.

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1890-1891 **Builder/Architect** J.M. Currier, architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Conant Public Library is significant architecturally as one of the best public library buildings in Cheshire County, notable as a fine Romanesque Revival building, and particularly as the best Victorian Romanesque Revival library building in the county. Eligible under Criterion C.

Winchester's public library was established in 1876, when the Washington Library Association, a private library association, donated its collection to the Town for a municipal library. In the late 1880's, the town library was "poorly accommodated in an upstairs room" ¹ of a Winchester village commercial block. By then, some thought had been given to finding better quarters for the library, as well as to acquiring a new town hall to replace the late 18th century wooden meetinghouse that the Town shared with the Universalist church. At the annual town meeting in 1884, the voters had gone so far as to authorize the purchase of a site, the old Hotel lot, a prominent Main Street lot, named for the Parker House, which has burned during the Civil War. However, no action was taken at that time. At the March 1887 meeting, the Selectmen were appointed a committee to consider the fate of the old Town Hall. Their report, delivered to the 1888 annual meeting, prompted a vote of the Town to establish another committee "to procure the refusal of a suitable location ... for the erection of a Town Hall in the village of Winchester, and to procure plans and specifications of a building to more suitably accommodate the Town for Town Hall, Town Library, Town Offices, and for such other purposes as may be deemed necessary".² At the March, 1889 annual meeting, the committee recommended that the old Hotel lot be purchased for \$1500. The voters reaffirmed their decision of 1884. And the lot was acquired by the Town in May.

But, during the winter of 1888-89, the situation had been changed by the death on October 20 of Extra Conant and the subsequent announcement of his generous bequest to his native town. Conant, born in Winchester in 1812, had moved to Boston as a young man. There he made his fortune in the patent leather business, before retiring to devote his time to travel and philanthropy. His wife and three children all predeceased him. So, in his will, Conant established a \$50,000 trust fund, the income of the fund to be paid during her lifetime to Helen F. Granger, who had been engaged to his son at the time of the son's death. But, the will continued, "at the decease of said Helen F. Granger, then I direct my said Trustees ... to pay over said principal ... and all increase thereof ... to the town of Winchester ...

1. Keene Evening Sentinel (Keene, N.H.) September 23, 1892
2. "Winchester Town Records, 1880-1900" (manuscript, Town Clerk's Office, Winchester Town Hall, Winchester, N.H.) p. 163

9. Major Bibliographical References

(See Continuation Sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .29 acre

Quadrangle name Keene, N.H.-Vt.

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

A

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Verbal boundary description and justification

(See Continuation Sheet)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David L. Ruell

organization date April 12, 1987

street & number 16 Hill Street telephone 603-968-7716

city or town Ashland state New Hampshire 03217

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

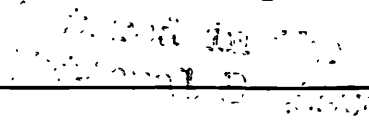
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature R. Stuart Wallace

title New Hampshire State Historic Preservation Officer date July 23, 1987

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for Shelores Byers  date 8-27-87
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

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Conant Public Library

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for the purpose of purchasing and maintaining a Public Library; provided however ... that said town shall within six years after this will shall have been duly proved and allowed in the Probate Court, erect a suitable brick or stone building in the central village of said town, for the sole purpose of a Public Library." ³ At the March 1889 town meeting, the voters accepted the bequest, and to show their gratitude, renamed the public library for Ezra Conant. ⁴

Now, however, the Town would have to erect a separate building for the library, instead of including it in the all purpose municipal building that had been proposed. (Indeed, one of the reasons given by the committee for purchasing the old Hotel lot was that it could accomodate both a town hall and a library building.) The March 1889 town meeting therefore established a three man committee "to obtain plans and specifications for a Library Building" ⁵ and to report at a recessed meeting in September. The committee later reported that "Having learned of the great satisfaction which the citizens of Brattleboro, Vt. manifested in their library building" built in 1886, "your committee decided to inspect it, and were not long in agreeing that with some modifications in ornamentation, and a little additional room ..., it would be a very 'suitable' structure for the Conant Library. Accordingly we consulted with the architect who furnished the plans for the Brooks Library at Brattleboro, Mr. J.M. Currier of Springfield, Mass., and ... contracted with Mr. Currier, to furnish working plans and specifications" ⁶ for the proposed library. ⁷ Currier's design for a Romanesque Revival building was presented to the voters at the recessed September 10 meeting. After some discussion, the meeting voted to accept the plans, but to allow the committee to modify the details to reduce the cost of the building. The architect had estimated the cost at \$16,000, but, in

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3. Will of Ezra Conant, quoted in the "Report of the Conant Library Building Committee" ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE TOWN OFFICERS OF WINCHESTER, N.H. FOR THE YEAR ENDING MARCH 1, 1891 (Keene, N.H.: 1891) pp. 3-4
 4. Although the bequest was the main reason for the erection of the new library building, the Town did not actually receive the Conant trust funds until 1924, after the death of the primary beneficiary.
 5. "Winchester Town Records" p. p.186
 6. "Report of the Conant Library Building Committee" ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE TOWN OFFICERS OF WINCHESTER, N.H. FOR THE YEAR ENDING MARCH 1, 1891 p.7
 7. The architect was also hired at the same time by the Town Hall committee to design a town hall. But, these plans were never used, the Town remaining in its old meetinghouse until it burned in 1909. The Town then chose the plans of another architect for a new town hall on the old Hotel lot, north of the library.

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Conant Public Library

Section number 8 Page 3

its appropriation for the building, the Town voted that the cost was not to exceed \$15,000. The Selectmen and the Town Treasurer were authorized to borrow that amount. The committee was instructed to advertise for bids for the construction of the building, to be completed before January 1, 1892. And, finally, the voters designated the south part of the old Hotel lot as the site for the new library.

The building committee obtained the approval of the Conant trustees for the proposed design. On November 30, when the bids for the building were opened, Mather & Whiting's bid of \$15,100 proved to be the lowest. The Northampton, Mass. firm agreed to discount the \$100, and signed a contract on December 9 to complete the structure for \$15,000 by October 1, 1891. Work began in April of 1890. A special town meeting in May, 1890 appropriated additional funds for sitework. In September, a Keene newspaper could report that, "The Conant library building is progressing finely."⁸ By December, "the outside of the building was neraly completed and the plastering being completed inside."⁹ On May 8, 1891, the Hinsdale paper noted that "Work was commenced on the interior of the library building this week."¹⁰ By August, the same paper could report that "the library building is fast approaching completion."¹¹ Finally, near the end of the year, the Winchester correspondent of the Hinsdale paper was able to report that the architect and contractors "were in town Tuesday [December 15, 1891] when the final settlements were made and the building turned over to the town."¹² There was some delay in moving the library from its old quarters, as it was not until the spring that the local papers could announce that that the library would open for business in its new home on April 16.

Few changes have been made to the building since its construction, particularly on the exterior. One chimney was removed, sometime before 1927. Storm windows and doors were installed in 1978. The rear basement door was replaced about 1980. And a new hood, in a pseudo-Victorian design complete with slate roof, was built over the basement door, in the same period. The interior has seen more changes, but virtually all of the original interior features survive intact. In the 1930's or 1940's, the large semicircular opening between the second story hallway and the stack area was closed. In the 1960's, the traffic pattern was changed when the doors from the children's room and the reference room to the entry hall were closed, and

8. New Hampshire Sentinel (Keene, N.H.) September 10, 1890

9. "Report of the Conant Library Building Committee" ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE TOWN OFFICERS OF WINCHESTER, N.H. FOR THE YEAR ENDING MARCH 1, 1891 p. 11

10. Valley Record (Hinsdale, N.H.) May 8, 1891

11. Valley Record August 7, 1891

12. Valley Record December 18, 1891

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the doors from the same two rooms into the checkout area were removed. About 1967, the original librarian's desk, which was located across the southeast end of the checkout area to control access to the stacks, was replaced by a modern desk on the southwest side of the checkout area, reflecting a change from closed to open stacks. The side entry hall was turned into a workroom in the late 1960's, when the side entry doors were sealed off. Another door was removed between the side entry hall and the stack area. And the passageway from the side entry hall to the stair tower was closed off to create a recess for the library safe about 1975. The basement floor has been concreted to provide better storage space. The restroom now has a linoleum floor. And modern lights, restroom fixtures, and heating system have been installed over the years. But, the cumulative impact of these changes, both exterior and interior, has been quite minor. Save for the removed doors, no significant architectural features have been eliminated. The exterior and the interiors appear today almost as they did in 1891.

The Brooks Library in Brattleboro, which so inspired the Winchester building committee, is no longer extant, having been replaced by a larger modern building. The Winchester library did share some elements of form and detail with its Vermont predecessor, a building which was composed of a hip roofed main block with a rear wing and a central, gable roofed entry pavilion. But, the Brattleboro library was a smaller and less elaborate building, being only one story high with a high basement. J.M. Currier essentially produced a new design for the Winchester library, a building that was not only larger than the Vermont library, but also differed in many features, such as the arched windows, the dormers, the stair tower, and, apparently, much of the ornament.

For Cheshire County, the Winchester library represented a departure from previous practice, as it was the first Romanesque Revival library building in the county. It should be noted, however, that there were only three other buildings erected as public libraries in the county, when the Conant Public Library opened. The Frost Free Library (1867) of Marlborough and the Stratton Free Library (1884) in West Swanzey are both Classical buildings. The contemporary Bridge Memorial Library (1891) in Walpole was a Shingle Style structure. The Conant Public Library was followed by three more Romanesque inspired libraries. H.M. Francis, a Fitchburg, Mass. architect, designed both the Ingalls Memorial Library (1894-5) in Rindge and the Clay Library (1895-6) in Jaffrey. In 1903-5, a small brick schoolhouse in Westmoreland was remodeled for the town library, receiving a Romanesque inspired front with arched windows and doorway and two miniature towers. (Although a quaint and interesting building, the Westmoreland Public Library cannot match the architectural quality of the architect designed buildings in Winchester, Rindge and Jaffrey.) But, the popularity of the Romanesque

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Revival proved short lived. In the twentieth century, new library buildings in the county were built primarily in the Classical style, such as the fine Shedd-Porter Memorial Library (1910) in Alstead, or in the popular Colonial Revival style, such as the pleasant Chesterfield Library (1938-40).

Among the four Romanesque Revival library buildings in Cheshire County, the Conant Public Library is the only example of that style or substyle which has been called the Victorian Romanesque Revival, as distinguished from the earlier Romanesque Revival of the mid 19th century, and from the Richardsonian Romanesque Revival of the late 19th century. The Victorian Romanesque Revival was distinguished from the two other Romanesque styles by a greater emphasis on ornament, seen in polychrome exteriors with different colored stone and brick, terra cotta tiles, and decorative bricks, and from the Richardsonian Romanesque by a more varied form than is usually found in the massive, solid Richardsonian buildings. The Conant Public Library is a good example of the Victorian Romanesque. Its red brick walls are decorated with contrasting materials- light granite, used in sills, impost blocks, the watertable, string courses and parapets on the pavilion and the dormers; buff bricks used in the brick bands and the arches; and terra cotta tiles used in the pavilion gable and the rear wing arches. The slot-like panels, the brick and metal cornices, the elaborate entry pavilion and dormers, the copper ridge mouldings and tower finial, and the entry's tympanum screen further enliven the library's facades. By contrast, the Richardsonian libraries in Rindge and Jaffrey are almost monochrome, with dark red brick walls trimmed by dark brown stone, and have much simpler ornament. Francis's two libraries, although differing in size, do both have forms reminiscent of the Winchester library, a hip roofed main block with a central, gable roofed entry pavilion and a lower hip roofed rear wing. But, the masses of Francis's buildings are more unified, while Currier distinguished the sections of his building and added gables and dormers to the main block's hip roof and the quite distinctive circular stair tower with its steep conical roof, thereby creating a more varied form. All three libraries are fine examples of the Romanesque Revival, but the Winchester library reflects an aesthetic preference that is not apparent in the Jaffrey and Rindge libraries. (The Romanesque Revival style of the Conant Public Library's exterior had little influence on the interiors, which are typical of the late Victorian period. They are dignified and pleasant spaces, notable for their symmetrical layout, spaciousness, and attractive ornament. The two story high stack area, with its two tiers of windows and high beaded board ceiling supported by great trusses, is a particularly impressive space.)

Moving from the question of style to that of quality, we find that the Conant Public Library ranks among the best public library buildings in Cheshire County. A list of the county's best libraries would include barely

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a half dozen buildings, the three Romanesque Revival libraries that we have just described in Winchester, Rindge and Jaffrey, and the already mentioned Classical style libraries in Marlborough, West Swanzey and Alstead. Given the variety of styles and design philosophies represented in these six libraries, one would hesitate to rank them more precisely. But, the Conant Public Library certainly holds its own among these fine buildings.

In summary, the Conant Public Library is an excellent, well preserved example of Victorian Romanesque Revival architecture, and one of the best public library buildings in Cheshire County, a building well deserving of National Register recognition.

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ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE TOWN OFFICERS OF WINCHESTER, N.H. FOR THE YEAR
ENDING MARCH 1, 1890 (Keene, N.H.; 1890)

ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE TOWN OFFICERS OF WINCHESTER, N.H. FOR THE YEAR
ENDING MARCH 1, 1891 (Keene, N.H.: 1891)

ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE TOWN OFFICERS OF WINCHESTER, N.H. FOR THE YEAR
ENDING MARCH 1, 1892 (Keene, N.H.: 1892)

Cheshire Republican (Keene, N.H.) April 11, May 9, August 8, 1890;
April 8 & 15, 1892

Keene Evening Sentinel (Keene, N.H.) September 23, 1892

New Hampshire Sentinel (Keene, N.H.) April 23, May 7, September 10,
November 5, 1890

Valley Record (Hinsdale, N.H.) February 13, May 8, June 19, August 7,
November 6, December 18, 1891; March 11 & 25, April 15, 1892

"Winchester Town Records, 1880-1890" (manuscript, Winchester Town Clerk's
Office, Winchester Town Hall, Winchester, N.H.)

interviews, Edith Atkins, March 20 & 30, April 8, 1987 (The March 30
interview was conducted by Rob Nichols.)

interviews, Rob Nichols April 8 & 9, 1987

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The boundary of the nominated property is shown as a line on the accompanying map entitled "Conant Public Library, Winchester, N.H.". The nominated property is bounded on the northwest by Main Street, on the southwest and southeast by the historic property boundaries of the original town owned lot, and on the northeast by an arbitrary line that parallels the northeast wall of the Library's main block at a distance of twenty feet and which represents the approximate boundary between the grounds of the Library and the grounds of the Winchester Town Hall. The nominated property includes the Conant Public Library and its historic grounds, being that portion of the original town owned lot that was occupied by the Library. Adjoining land later acquired by the Town of Winchester has not been included in the nominated property. (Winchester Tax Map 26, Lot 55)

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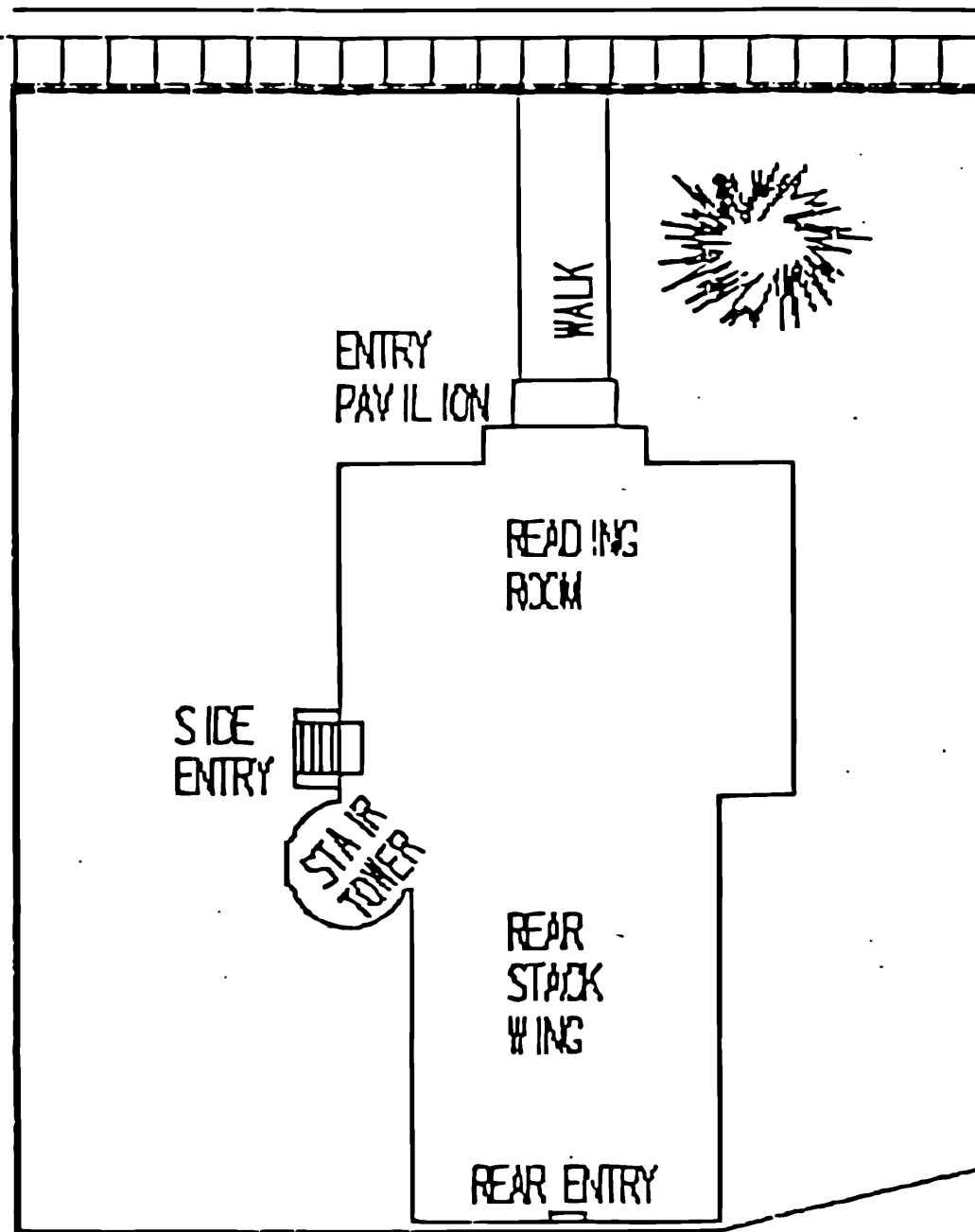
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Boundaries of the nominated property are highlighted in yellow on the sketch map.

MAIN STREET - ROUTE 10

MEMORIAL
PARK

TOWN HALL



CONANT PUBLIC LIBRARY

WINCHESTER NH

