

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

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**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **AUG 5 1986**

date entered **SEP 4 1986**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Ossian Wilbur Goss Reading Rooms

and/or common Ossian Wilbur Goss Reading Room (Preferred)

2. Location

street & number 188 Elm Street, Lakeport N/A not for publication

city, town Laconia N/A vicinity of

state New Hampshire code 33 county Belknap code 001

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" 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 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"/> NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: <u>Library</u>

4. Owner of Property

name Trustees of the Ossian Goss Trust c/o A. Gerard O'Neil

street & number 189 Union Avenue

city, town Laconia _____ vicinity of state New Hampshire 03246

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Belknap County Courthouse
Belknap County Registry of Deeds (Book 78, Page 236)

street & number 64 Court Street

city, town Laconia state New Hampshire 03246

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historical Inventory of Laconia has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1979 federal state county local

depository for survey records City of Laconia, Planning Department, City Hall

city, town Laconia state New Hampshire 03246

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Ossian Wilbur Goss Reading Room is a library building that stands on its own lot at the northwest corner of the intersection of Elm and Franklin Streets in Lakeport, a section of the city of Laconia. The one story, red brick building consists of two major gable roofed elements in an L-shaped plan. The reading room proper is set parallel to Franklin Street. Perpendicular to the reading room, and stretching to its south towards Franklin Street, is the wing, which contains the entrance hall and the children's room. The east (Elm Street) facades of the reading room and the wing are continuous. The wing has a small shed roofed vestibule on its Elm Street (east) facade and a three-sided bay window (with a five-sided roof) on its rear (west) facade. In the westerly angle of the reading room and the wing is the low basement entry, actually a formerly open below grade stairway and well that has been covered by shed roofs.

The reading room and the wing are both set on brick foundations laid in stretcher bond and topped by a watertable composed of a course of ovolo or "quarter round" shaped bricks. Above the watertable, the brick walls are laid in flemish bond, with some darker headers to emphasize the pattern. The slate gable roofs of the reading room and the wing, (and the slate roof of the bay window) have copper ridge mouldings and copper flashing in the valleys. The brick gable end walls are continued above the roofs to form low parapets. To enliven the gable profiles, the ends of the parapets were given shallow flat topped corbels. On the rakes of the gables, the two courses of bricks beneath the shallow copper cornices that crown the parapets, were laid parallel to the rake. Sheet copper covers the tops and the inner sides of the parapets. The lateral eaves of the roofs are distinguished by deep wooden box cornices with decorative mouldings. Breaking the rear slope of the wing's roof (which is slightly lower than the reading room roof) is a tall wide brick chimney with a corbeled cap.

The two (east and west) gable ends of the reading room are virtually identical. Each is dominated by a tall and wide triple window with a moulded wooden frame and a granite sill beneath a segmental brick arch. The triple window is divided into two levels. The taller lower level has a central fifteen over fifteen sash window and narrower flanking six over six sash windows. The upper level windows has fixed windows, a central ten pane window and flanking four pane windows. The upper level windows are curved to fit the segmental arch. In each gable is a small two pane attic window with moulded wooden frame, granite sill and flat brick arch. The east (Elm Street) gable end has a tapered wooden flagpole, which is attached to the wall just above the gable window and projects high above the parapet. (The east gable end is also distinguished by the vines that now cover it.) The west gable end has two three pane basement windows in the foundation. These basement windows have flat brick arches and simply moulded wooden frames. (The southern window also has a granite sill.) The north facade of the reading room has three double windows, each with two six over six sash windows, moulded wooden frame, granite sill and flat brick arch with granite keystone. A double window of the same design appears in the south facade to the west of the wing.

The northern half of the wing's east facade is covered by the vestibule, formerly an open porch. The vestibule shares the brick foundation with watertable found on the reading room and the wing. Brick posts at the corners of the vestibule rise from low brick side walls (laid in flemish bond) to support the shed roof. The inner cornerposts, attached to the wing's facade, are rectangular, while the outer corner posts are L-shaped in plan. All four posts are topped by wooden mouldings that serve as "capitals." The granite silled opening left above the brick side wall on both the north and south is filled by seven ornately turned balusters set in front of a sixteen pane window. The east entry facade contains (between the cornerposts) a door and sidelights above a granite sill and a granite step with rounded ends. The entry door is paneled with a large twelve pane builtin window. The eight pane two-thirds sidelights are set above moulded panels. The door and sidelight frames have simple beaded mouldings. The

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vestibule is crowned by a horizontal wooden box cornice with frieze and mouldings. A modern light fixture is mounted on the cornice above the door. The north and south half gables have flush boarded triangular panels and shallow moulded verges. The shed roof is sheathed with copper.

Mounted in the wall to the south of the vestibule, on the wing's Elm Street (east) facade is a rectangular granite plaque with a simple raised border and the inscription "Ossian Wilbur Goss/Reading Rooms/1906." The three bay wide south gable end has three main level windows, a small central four over four sash window and two six over six sash windows in the side bays. All have moulded wooden frames, granite sills and segmental arched brick heads. In the foundation beneath the central window is a small one pane window with simply moulded wooden frame, granite sill and flat brick arch. This basement window is set in a shallow below grade well with brick interior walls and a granite coping. In the gable is another small two pane attic window, with moulded wooden frame, granite sill, and flat brick arch. Much of the rear (west) facade of the wing is taken up by the three sided bay window, which is set only a half foot from the wing's south-west corner. The bay window shares with the wing, the same brick foundation with watertable, flemish bond brick walls, and lateral wooden box cornice. Each side of the bay window has a window with moulded wooden frame, granite sill, and segmental brick arch, a wider six over six sash window in the center section, and four over four sash windows on the narrower angled sides. North of the bay window in the west facade is a six over six sash window with the usual moulded wooden frame, granite sill, and segmental brick arch.

The basement entry, a now covered well, fills the angle between the reading room and the wing, and overlaps the wing's bay window. The basement entry has low (two and a half feet high) walls of brick laid in stretcher bond, and a plywood sheathed southern half gable. The low pitched shed roof is trimmed by a plain wooden box cornice with sloping soffit and is sheathed with asphalt roll paper. Projecting above the main roof is the stairway with its plywood walls trimmed by cornerboards and its steeply pitched shed roof sheathed with asphalt roll paper. The stairway roof is trimmed by close verges on the north and south and by a simple box cornice above the stairway door to the west. The modern metal door has a three pane builtin window, a plain frame, and a granite sill. Small louvered metal vents are found in the north and south walls.

The vestibule has a brick floor laid in a herringbone pattern. The walls are of brick, laid in flemish bond, with a base course of "quarter round" shaped bricks like the watertable on the exterior. The brick cornerposts are again topped by wooden mouldings that serve as "capitals". The east wall contains the outer entry, which as already noted, has a granite sill, a paneled central door with a large twelve pane window, and eight pane sidelights above moulded panels. In the north and south side walls are found large sixteen pane windows and the turned balusters above granite sills. The inner (west) wall contains the entry into the wing, a paneled door with four tall panels, two builtin four pane windows, and a plain frame, as well as ten pane, two-thirds sidelights set above moulded panels. The door and the sidelights share a granite sill, a moulded wooden outer frame, and a flat brick arch. Flanking this entry are two modern light fixtures. The sloping ceiling of beaded boards has exposed rafters with beaded edges and is trimmed by a moulded wooden cornice.

The inner entry opens into the entrance hall which occupies the northeast quarter of the wing. Like the other public rooms, the entrance hall has modern wall to wall carpeting. The walls are plastered above paneled wainscoating with vertical panels, simple baseboard and coping. The simple moulding that tops the coping of the wainscoating is continued around the

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doors. (This continuous moulding is repeated in other main level rooms.) A wooden cornice surrounds the plaster ceiling with its modern fluorescent light fixture. Most of the street (east) wall is occupied by the entry, the paneled door with two builtin windows and its flanking ten pane sidelights above moulded panels. The entry is set in a moulded frame with cornerblocks. Similar frames surround the hall's other doorways, two four panel doors in the south wall, and wider openings for double sliding doors in the west and north walls. (The modern carpeting now prevents the closing of the sliding doors.) The southern doors serve the basement stairway to the east and the restroom to the west. The opening in the west wall leads to the children's room, while the opening in the north wall serves the reading room itself. (A modern metal water fountain is now mounted on the north wall west of the doorway.)

The two levels of the basement stairway in the southeast corner of the wing have different wall treatments. The upper (main) level has plaster walls with a moulded baseboard. The lower level has three walls of vertical beaded boarding beneath a moulded coping, and a painted brick north wall at the bottom of the stairs. The plaster ceiling of the upper level is interrupted by a beaded board trapdoor set in a plain framed recess. (The trapdoor serves the unfinished attic with its brick gable walls, exposed joists and rafters. The little used attic is lit by an untrimmed two pane window in each of its three gables.) The upper level of the stairway is entered by a four panel door in the north wall and is lit by a six over six sash window in the south wall. Both the window and the door have simply moulded frames with cornerblocks. A low partition of vertical beaded boarding, topped by a moulded hand rail and supported by newelposts with turned urnlike caps, protects the upper hardwood floored landing and separates the flights of the stairway. From the main level landing, the wooden stairway descends three steps along the west wall, turns by four winding treads at the south end of the space, and then descends two steps along the east wall to the hardwood floored landing beneath the upper landing. Two steps to the west connect this lower landing with the basement corridor. The lower landing and the last two steps have painted brick walls on the north and the south and a ceiling of beaded boarding with a simple ceiling moulding.

The basement rooms all have concrete floors. With a few exceptions, they have unfinished board ceilings with exposed joists. The outer walls are usually painted fieldstone, beneath a short section of painted brick. The interior partitions are typically of painted brick. Modern fluorescent light fixtures light the rooms. The wing basement is divided by a north-south corridor, with the stairway and a storage room to its east, another storage room and a restroom to its west. The corridor is lit by a small one pane window with a plain frame beneath a segmental brick arch at its south end. Its ceiling is sheathed with plasterboard, although it is almost hidden by ducts and pipes. Plain framed, five panel doors connect the corridor with the two storage rooms, the restroom, and the reading room basement at its north end. The wing's northeast storage room is windowless. The southwest storage room has an unusual shape, as its west end is three sided, reflecting the bay window above it. In the northerly angled wall of the west end is a four over four sash window, with plain frame and segmental brick arch, which looks into the now covered basement entry. The restroom differs from the other basement rooms in having walls of vertical beaded boarding and a ceiling of beaded boarding with a simple ceiling moulding. The five panel door in its east wall and the six over six sash window in its west wall (again looking into the basement entry) both have plain frames with upper cornerblocks. The reading room basement is basically one large space, containing the furnace and the oil tank, with the northwest corner partitioned off by the usual painted brick walls

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to make another storage room. The concrete floor of the main space slopes up to the southwest corner, where the old basement door, a two panel door with a large single pane window, is found in the south wall. The south wall also contains the five panel door to the basement corridor and a painted brick projection (the base of the fireplace above). The only other openings are a three pane basement window (beneath a segmental brick arch) in the outer west wall and the five panel door to the northwest storage room. The main reading room basement has a composition board ceiling, but is otherwise like the other basement rooms. The northwest storage room can only boast the five panel door in its east wall and a three pane basement window beneath segmental brick arch in its west wall.

The basement entry, a formerly open well, still has its concrete floor and unpainted brick walls. (The "quarter round" brick watertable still appears on the north and east walls.) The sloping plywood ceiling has exposed rafters. The two panel door with large builtin window, the former basement door, in the north wall, and the two (now interior) windows, a six over six sash window in the east wall and a four over four sash window in the angled southeast corner (the base of the bay window), all have simply moulded wooden frames in deep brick recesses, granite sills, and flat brick arches. In the southwest corner, granite steps with brick sidewalls, rise up to the untrimmed modern metal rear door with its three pane builtin window. The upper level of the stairway has unfinished walls of plywood with exposed studs and a similar sloping ceiling with exposed rafters. A small louvered metal vent is found in each of the stairway's side walls.

Returning to the main level of the wing, we find the restroom just west of the basement stairway. The small narrow room has a linoleum floor, plaster walls above vertical beaded board wainscoating, and a plaster ceiling. The wainscoating has a moulded baseboard and a moulded coping topped by a moulding that continues around the window and door frames. The four panel door to the hall in the north wall and the small four over four sash window in the south wall both have moulded frames with cornerblocks. A gas fixture, now electrified, is mounted on the west wall. In the southeast corner is a boxed vent.

The children's room, which occupies the western half of the wing, has a somewhat irregular seven-sided shape, as the three sided bay window occupies roughly two-thirds of the west wall. The room has modern wall to wall carpeting. The wainscoating on the plastered walls features narrow vertical panels, a simple baseboard, and a coping topped by a moulding that is continued around the doors and windows. The moulded window and door frames have upper cornerblocks. A wooden cornice surrounds the plaster ceiling with its fluorescent light fixture. At the north end of the east wall is the wide opening to the hall. South of the opening, a half-height wooden bookcase with a simple cornice occupies the east wall and turns the southeast corner to reach the six over six sash window in the south wall. Beneath the southern window and continuing to its west is a shorter, simpler bookcase, which was obviously added in front of the original wainscoating. The southerly portion of the west wall is occupied by the bay window, which has the same wall and ceiling as the rest of the room. The bay window's three windows, a central six over six sash window and flanking four over four sash windows in the angled sections, have continuous sills and abutting frames. North of the bay window in the west wall is another six over six sash window. Beneath this window is a builtin wooden bench with a cushioned seat and a paneled bench end with armrest on the south. The bench is appropriately placed next to the fireplace in the north wall. The fireplace has a brick interior, surround and hearth, and a simply moulded wooden frame. Beneath the moulded mantelshelf is a deep quirked cyma reversa moulding. East of the fireplace is a small builtin wall cabinet. The low cabinet, now doorless, has a beaded board interior, and is now used as a bookcase.

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The building's principal space is the reading room itself. The floor is now covered with modern wall to wall carpeting. The lower portions of the plaster walls are, save where interrupted by the fireplace, the triple windows, and the hall doorway, completely covered with bookcases. (The chest high bookcases are topped by simple cornices.) The sole exceptions are small portions of the south wall flanking the opening into the hall, which have paneled wainscoting with simply moulded baseboard and coping. A similar "coping" is found above the bookcases. A simple moulding topping the bookcase and wainscoting coping is continued around the windows and up the sides of the hall opening and the fireplace. The north and south (lateral) walls are crowned by pronounced wooden cornices with mouldings and friezes. The high, three pitched plaster ceiling is divided into three sections by four boxed beams trimmed by ceiling mouldings, including two boxed beams at the east and west ends of the room, where they serve to crown the end walls. The boxed beams rest on very short wall posts which interrupt the lateral cornices and are decorated with chamfered edges and carved pendants. Three large fluorescent light fixtures hang from the ceiling. Older, ornate light fixtures, each with two lights on brackets, are still mounted on the north and south walls.

The east and west ends of the reading room are virtually identical, each being dominated by a large, segmental arched, triple window. As noted above, these triple windows are divided into two levels, with a central fifteen over fifteen sash window and flanking six over six sash windows in the main level, a central ten pane window and flanking four pane windows (with curved upper sash) in the upper level. These windows all have simply moulded frames, but are set in a more elaborate moulded outer frames with upper cornerblocks. Beneath each triple window is a builtin wooded bench with cushioned seat, paneled back, and paneled bench ends with flat armrests. In the north wall above the bookcases are found three double windows, whose two six over six sash windows each have simply moulded frames in a shallow recess. The recess itself is trimmed by the typical moulded frame with upper cornerblocks. Another window of the same design is found in the western section of the south wall. At the east end of the south wall is the opening (with non-functional sliding doors) to the hall. The frame of this opening has the usual mouldings and cornerblocks, but is distinguished by a fine crowning cornice. The south wall is dominated by a massive central fireplace, which projects into the room. The brick hearth, laid in a herringbone pattern, is raised above the floor and surrounded by a dressed granite curb with rounded edges. The fireplace opening with its brick interior and flat brick arch is small compared to its large brick surround, which is twice the height of the opening and almost twice its width. The upper portion of the brick surround is decorated by five ceramic tiles. Four depict charging knights on horseback, while the central tile shows two birds flanking a flower. The brick surround has a moulded wooden frame with cornerblocks, similar to the interior door frames. The east and west sides of the fireplace each have two panels, a tall lower wooden panel and a small upper panel with moulded wooden frame and a brick field decorated by another ceramic tile depicting two birds flanking a flower. Above the brick surrounds moulded frame and the side panels is found an elaborate deep mantelshelf with mouldings and horizontal brackets decorated with carved shields. Above the mantelshelf is a moulded wooden "baseboard". The first three courses of the brick "chimney breast" above the baseboard are laid directly on top of each other. But, each course thereafter is stepped back from the course below, so that the "chimney breast" tapers back on all three sides, ending at the ceiling flush with the outer moulding of the lateral cornice. Three corbels project from the tapering chimney breast to create small brick shelves.

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The four sided lot, bounded by Elm Street on the east and by Franklin Street on the south, is set on the side of a hill. A high stone retaining wall, interrupted by concrete steps with a wrought metal handrail, occupies most of the lot frontage along the Franklin Street sidewalk. The spot on which the building sits and the land directly west of the building is relatively level. But the land slopes down from this high flat area towards Franklin Street and, less steeply, towards Elm Street. Short stone retaining walls are found along the north boundary. The concrete walk from the Elm Street sidewalk to the main entry in the vestibule incorporates some seven granite steps as it rises to the entry, two at the sidewalk, one halfway to the building, and four just six feet from the entry. Metal pipe hand rails flank these four steps and the last section of the sidewalk. The grassed lot is ornamented by shrubs and trees. Shrubs grow in front of the reading room and along the Franklin Street wall. A dense growth of trees and shrubs is found along the north boundary. More impressive are three large maples, one behind the building, the others on the Franklin Street frontage.

The nominated property represents one contributing building.

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 type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" 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 1905–1906 **Builder/Architect** Willard P. Adden, architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Ossian Wilbur Goss Reading Room is significant architecturally as an attractive small library building and as an interesting example of early 20th century architecture.

About 1890, a citizens group established a public library in Lakeport, then a village in the town of Gilford. In 1893, when Lakeport was annexed to the new city of Laconia, the Lakeport Library became a branch of the Laconia Public Library. This Lakeport branch was housed in rented quarters, never having a separate building of its own. Therefore, when the Gale Memorial Library was opened in downtown Laconia in early June 1903, the books of the Lakeport branch were moved to the new city library and merged into the main library collection. A system for exchanging library books at a Lakeport store was subsequently established. But Lakeport no longer had a library of its own, with a reading room for the use and pleasure of its residents. To Dr. Ossian Wilbur Goss of Lakeport, this was apparently a significant loss.

Dr. Goss and Lakeport had suffered another major loss on May 26, 1903, just two weeks before the closing of the Lakeport library, when a catastrophic fire destroyed a large section of Lakeport. Among the 108 dwellings lost was the Goss family home at the corner of Elm and Franklin Streets. Dr. Goss soon made plans for building "an elegant residence"¹, a brick Colonial style house, at this prominent site. But, as his will, signed September 16, 1903, reveals, his plans for the future of the new house were unusual. Dr. Goss had no natural heirs, his wife and only child having died some years before. In his will, after leaving small bequest to friends, relatives and local charities, he directed that the remainder of his estate be turned over to three trustees who were instructed "to invest the same and use the income only in furnishing, equipping and maintaining, in the homestead house about to be erected by me in said Lakeport, suitable Reading Parlors for the use and enjoyment of the general public of Lakeport, to be forever known as 'The Ossian Wilbur Goss Reading Rooms.'" "The reading rooms were "to be kept open at all seasonable hours" and "to be provided with all the latest magazines and at least three daily papers". Then in a foreboding clause, the physician stated that, "if, for any reason, I have not erected my homestead house at the time of my decease, then...I also give the said trustees full power out of the remainder of my property to erect a substantial building, at a cost not to exceed Eight Thousand Dollars" for the Reading Rooms, with "the income of whatever remains after erecting such a building...to be expended" for its maintenance and operation.² On October 8, just three weeks after signing the will, Dr. Goss died of Bright's Disease at the age of 47, with his dream of a new residence still unfulfilled.

1. Laconia News and Critic August 23, 1905

2. "Will of Ossian Wilbur Goss" in the "Belknap County Probate Records, Docket 7134, Ossian W. Goss" (manuscripts, Belknap County Registry of Probate, Belknap County Courthouse, Laconia, N.H.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

"Belknap County Probate Records, Docket 7134, Ossian W. Goss" (manuscripts, Belknap County Registry of Probate, Belknap County Courthouse, Laconia, N.H.)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .4 acre

Quadrangle name Winnipesaukee, N.H.

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

A

1	9	3	0	0	7	5	0	4	8	2	4	5	5	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification The nominated property is a four sided lot, bounded on the northeast by Elm Street, on the south by Franklin Street, on the north by a boundary line parallel to Franklin Street at a distance of approximately 90 feet from Franklin Street sidewalk, and on the west by a boundary line perpendicular to Franklin Street and beginning

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

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David Ruell

organization Lakes Region Planning Commission date February 9, 1986

street & number Main Street telephone 603-279-8171

city or town Meredith state New Hampshire 03253

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 S. J. Adamovich

title New Hampshire State Historic Preservation Officer date 7/29/86

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

for Alvina Byer date 9/4/86
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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The settling of the Goss estate required some time and the construction of the Goss Reading Room took even longer than expected. In November of 1904, the local newspapers announced that the trustees hoped to have the plans for the new building ready by spring and to begin construction at that time. For the plans, the trustees turned to the Boston architectural firm of Adden and Parker. Willard P. Adden was already known in Laconia for his design of the Congregational Church at Veterans (then Depot) Square, on which construction began in April of 1905. So he was a natural choice for the new Lakeport building.³ It is not clear when the architects were actually hired, but the plans were not completed until the late summer of 1905. In late August, the trustees traveled to Boston to review the plans and specifications. In late September, the Laconia News and Critic noted that the final plans were "expected from the architect this week" and that it was "the intention of the trustees to have the building erected this fall".⁴ In early October, the Laconia papers reported that the contract for the building had been awarded to Lakeport builder Orvis T. Muzzey and that work had begun on the foundation. By the end of December, it could be reported that the exterior was nearing completion. In early January, the slaters were said to be about to begin work on the roof. But, no further reports appear in the newspapers until July, when it was noted that "the interior of the Ossian Wilbur Goss reading room is being finished".⁵ It is uncertain when the building was actually completed, or what was the final cost of the structure. The first formal report of the trustees, made in 1909, apparently combines construction and operating costs, making it difficult to determine the exact cost. An estimate based on this report would place the construction cost between \$6000 and \$7000. Finally, on April 8, 1907, the Goss Reading Room was opened to the public without ceremony. Although the newspapers of the time clearly note an intention to operate a branch of the Laconia Public Library in the new building, it was not until February 18, 1909, that the Goss trustees actually petitioned for the establishment of the branch library. On March 1, the trustees of the city library agreed. A week later on March 8, the branch library was in operation in the Lakeport building. Since then, the Goss Reading Room has been run by the Laconia Public Library, with financial assistance from the Goss trustees, who still own the property and administer the Goss trust funds.

Changes to the building since its construction have been fairly limited. The exterior has seen the most important change. Apparently, the vestibule was originally an open entry porch, but was later enclosed by the addition of a door and sidelights on the front and of windows behind the balusters in the side openings. The rear basement entry, originally an open below grade stairway and well, was covered by low roofs in the winter of 1972-73. But, aside from a modern light mounted above the main door, no other changes seem to have been made to the exterior. The interior is even less changed. Modern carpeting was laid in 1972. Modern

3. The Goss trustees' first report records a payment of \$188.68 for "Plans and Expenses", to Adden and Parker, but does not name the individual who designed the building ("First Account of Trustees, December 23, 1909" in "Belknap County Probate Records, Docket 7134, Ossian W. Goss"). The Laconia News and Critic of September 27, 1905 did however state that "the architect is the same who furnished designs for the Congregational church at the south end."

4. Laconia News and Critic September 27, 1905

5. Laconia Democrat July 20, 1906

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light fixtures have been installed, as has a wall mounted water fountain in the hall. Some additional bookcases have appeared, particularly in the children's room, which, according to the newspapers at the time of the construction, was planned as "a waiting room or parlor where the weary may have opportunity for rest and sociability",⁶ and seems to have acquired its present function at a later period. Despite these changes, practically all of the original features of the interior and the exterior survive intact.

In 1905, as the exterior of the Goss Reading Room was nearing completion, a Laconia newspaper noted that "the building presents a more modest front than was expected by many".⁷ And, indeed, the small library is a modest building, probably due to the financial constraints under which the trustees and the architect had to operate. The available funds only allowed the construction of a small building, with little money left over for ornament or non-functional space. Although obviously working within a tight budget, the architect nevertheless managed to produce a rather picturesque building. The building was separated into three components, the reading room itself, the wing for the subsidiary rooms, and the vestibule. The wing was further enlivened by a bay window dominating its rear facade. As a result, the Goss Reading Room has a rather complex form for a building of its small size. The design was not guided by allegiance to any of the high styles of the period. The parpeted gables, and the large triple window, the boxed beams, and the massive fireplace of the reading room are reminiscent of the Jacobethan Revival. Other elements, such as the "capitals" of the vestibule cornerposts, the vestibule cornice and the lateral cornices of the reading room and the wing, and the children's room fireplace, are more classical in inspiration. But, none of these stylistic features are so dominant that we can attach a high style label to the building. Other features, such as the interior window and door trim, are simply typical of the period. So, it is clear that the architect was not striving, as he did in the Gothic Revival Congregational Church in Veterans Square, to reproduce a past style. His design was primarily eclectic, using whatever elements needed to meet that goal of a pleasant and attractive building. And one must admit that he reached that goal. Despite its small size, the Goss Reading Room, aided in part by its prominent location overlooking a major intersection, does present an interesting and distinguished exterior appearance. The brick building, with its picturesque form and exterior details, stands out in its residential neighborhood, although, it is, in fact, smaller than most of the nearby houses. The three public rooms are also of interest. The entrance hall and the children's room are modest but comfortable rooms. The reading room is a more impressive space, with its high, three pitched ceiling with boxed beams, the bookcase lined walls, the large triple windows with their window benches, and the massive brick fireplace. But the reading room is not overpowering. It remains a pleasant, well-lit room, a quiet suitable place for the newspaper reader, the book browser, and the young student.

Among the public library buildings in Belknap County, the Goss Reading Room stands out as the only example of early 20th century eclectic architecture. All of the other library buildings in the county, from the Gordon-Nash Library of New Hampton (1895-96) to the Gilman Library of Alton (1951), were built in a recognizable high style. The Classical and Colonial Revival styles were the most popular, accounting for every library building, save for Laconia's two buildings, the Romanesque Revival Gale Memorial Library (1901-03) and the eclectic Goss Reading Room. The Ossian Wilbur Goss Reading Room, although not ranked among the grander library buildings of the county, must still be considered, despite its modest size, one of Belknap County's most interesting public buildings, quite worthy of National Register recognition.

6. Laconia News and Critic August 23, 1905

7. Laconia News and Critic December 6, 1905

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ELEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES OF THE CITY OF LACONIA, NEW HAMPSHIRE FOR THE YEAR ENDING FEBRUARY 15, 1904 (Laconia, 1904)

LACONIA CITY DIRECTORY, 1905-6, INCLUDING LAKEPORT AND THE WEIRS (Methuen, Mass. 1905)

Laconia Democrat October 9, 1903; November 11, 1904; August 4 & 25, October 13, December 8 & 29, 1905; July 20, 1906; April 12, 1907; May 28, 1909

Laconia News and Critic July 8, October 14 & 28, 1903; November 9, 1904; August 23, September 27, October 11, December 6 & 13, 1905; January 10, 1906; April 10, 1907; March 3, 1909

Laconia Public Library "Minutes of Board of Trustees, 1971-1979" (manuscript, Gale Memorial Library, Laconia, N.H.)

SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES OF THE CITY OF LACONIA, NEW HAMPSHIRE FOR THE YEAR ENDING FEBRUARY 10, 1910 (Laconia, 1910)

interview, Barbara Cotton, January 23, 1986

interview, Marjories Center, February 3, 1986

interview, Dorothy McCracken February 7, 1986

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at a point approximately 240 feet west of the intersection of the Franklin and Elm Street sidewalks. The nominated property includes the Ossian Wilbur Goss Reading Room and the lot on which it has stood since its construction. (Laconia Tax Map 32, Street 71, Lot 6)
Boundaries are highlighted in yellow on the attached sketch map.

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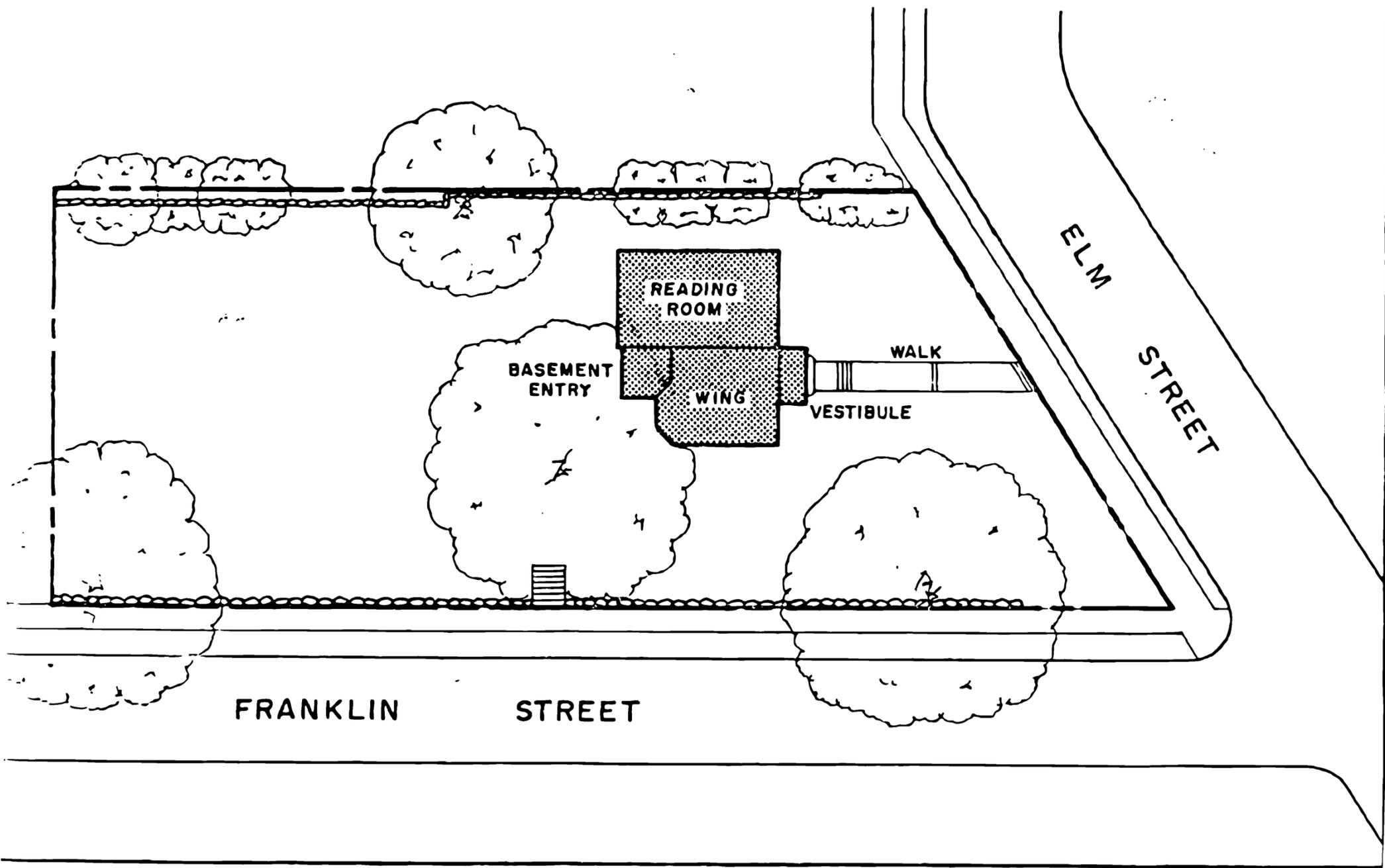
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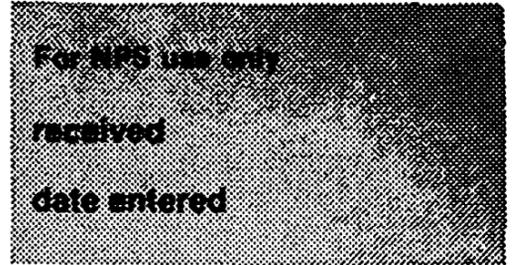


**Ossian Wilbur Goss
Reading Room
Laconia, N.H.**



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This certifies that the appearance of the photographs has not changed.