

OMB CONTROL NO. 1010-0108
EXP. 12-31-82

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received AUG 8 1984
date entered SEP 7 1984

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

1. Name

historic Seth Mason Richards House

and/or common Richards Free Library (preferred)

2. Location

street & number 58 North Main Street n/a not for publication

city, town Newport n/a vicinity of

state New Hampshire code 033 county Sullivan code 019

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> in process | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military |
| | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Library |

4. Owner of Property

name Richards Free Library Board of Trustees

street & number 58 North Main Street

city, town Newport n/a vicinity of state New Hampshire 03773

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Sullivan County Record Building

street & number P.O. Box 448, 28 Main Street

city, town Newport state New Hampshire 03773

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title New Hampshire Resources Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date August, 1981 federal state county local

depository for survey records Upper Valley - Lake Sunapee Council

city, town Lebanon state N.H.

7. Description

Condition
 excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one
 unaltered
 altered

Check one
 original site
 moved date n/a

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Set above a rock faced granite block foundation with an L-shaped plan, the Richards Free Library (originally the Seth Richards House) is two stories high with an attic capped by a truncated hip roof of dark gray slate and a parapet entablature. The house is sheathed in yellow vinyl siding applied in 1977 without removing any of the structure's architectural detailing and with minimal effect on the structure's integrity. The three bay facade features a central entrance flanked by two bowed, two story bays. Cornerboards adorned by indented chevrons articulate the building edges, while courses of dentils, modillions and pearl moldings embellish the cornice.

Above a concrete surface and granite steps, the flared rectangular entry portico is supported by four fluted Corinthian columns which carry a full entablature with triglyph-like blocks, raised ovals adorning the metopes, a fret molding and a modillioned cornice. The balustrade which once encircled the second story balcony surmounting the entrance has been removed as has that originally crowning the roof. The six panel door is flanked by flush 3/4 sidelights and topped by a full rectangular transom filled with leaded glass tracery and framed by fluted wooden pilasters, fluted moldings and corner blocks.

Above the entrance, intersecting Gothic tracery fills the upper sash of the Palladian window's center opening which is capped by a console keystone. Ionic pilasters frame the rectangular openings to each side and support a full entablature with dentil course. The windows on the second story of the facade echo the central panel of the Palladian window with arched upper sashes containing intersecting tracery and single light lower sash. The arrangement is repeated in the segmentally hooded dormer windows of the attic which flank a tri-part central dormer imitative of the Palladian window below and capped by a center gable with returns. Following the curves of the front bays are two sets of three doublehung windows with one over one sash on the first floor, again flanked by voluted pilaster strips, with dentils, wooden slipsills and wide mullions.

Open cross gable porticos with wood plank floors are located on the first floor level at the northeast and southeast corners. A modillion course adorns the cornice while a balustrade runs between the Roman doric columns of the portico and continues across the facade to the entrance.

On the lesser elevations, single rectangular doublehung windows with one over one sash predominate. Each is capped by a modillioned entablature lintel with bead and reel moldings, simple sills and wooden blinds. While those on the first floor feature a plain frieze, those on the second feature a frieze adorned by vertical indentations. With the exception of the facade and the multiple-part windows, all of the windows on the building are flanked by blinds. The dormer windows on the structure all feature segmental arch hoods decorated with projecting cornices containing molded friezes and dentil courses. On the single window dormers, the lower sash of the doublehung windows have three vertical mullions which continue into the upper sash where they sprout intersecting tracery. Variations on this theme are visible in the three Palladian window-derived dormers, each a tri-part dormer whose central section echoes the design of the single dormers but which is flanked by two rectangular doublehung windows, divided into two parts by a vertical mullion with abbreviated tracery. On the north and south elevations the dormer is capped by a segmental arch hood, that on the facade features a central gable with cornice returns.

Emerging from the center of the south elevation is a bowed two story bay with three single, doublehung one over one windows on each floor. Above, the balustrade which once framed the existing tri-part dormer, has been removed. to the east of this bowed bay, three rectangular windows mark the second story, while a tri-part rectangular window flanked by voluted pilaster strips is located on the first. Sheltered by the portico is a set of doubledoors with glass upper panes and crowned by transom lights. Beneath yet another dormer window, two rectangular windows on the second floor and one on the first

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separate the bowed bay from the second story pedimented wall dormer, supported by five brackets, which is located further to the west. A lunette window is located in the modillioned pediment while an entablatured tri-part rectangular window is on the second floor and a four part rectangular window is sheltered by the projecting wall dormer. Protruding slightly from the western edge of this elevation is a single pedimented bay on the first floor with a rectangular window on the second and a dormer window located above.

The north elevation is marked by a variety of planes corresponding to the portico, porte cochere and balcony contained therein. The easternmost part of this elevation measures five bays wide on the second story while on the first floor an open pedimented portico is offset to the north, protruding from the front of the first floor with a tri-part rectangular doublehung set of windows framed by Ionic pilaster strips and a single rectangular window situated west of this. Centered above are three dormer windows. West of this, emanating from the center of the library's L-shaped plan is a projecting single story porte cochere added about 1910. Distyle in antic Roman Doric columns support the full entablature and denticulated cornice of the balustraded flat roof which acts as a balcony for the second floor level. The balcony is open above the porte cochere and sheltered by a flat roof along the west elevation of the main house which is supported by two story Roman Doric columns distyle in antis, set on pedestals. A single rectangular doublehung window is sheltered by the second story balcony while a tri-part dormer window lights the attic above. The westernmost part of this elevation consists of a recessed section measuring two bays across with rectangular windows on each floor, while a single dormer window and chimney emerge from the roof above.

The rear (west) elevation consists of two parallel building planes. The southern protruding section measures two bays wide and houses a rear entrance porch at the first floor level, capped by a hip roof with a gable end on the south elevation. It is adorned by a denticulated cornice and supported by Roman Doric columns and features a wooden balustrade and wooden steps. The area south of the door with its multi-light upper window is enclosed and clapboarded. A single dormer window is located in the attic above. Recessed to the north is the three bay wide, two story portico, previously described. Of special interest facing westward is a tri-part rectangular multi-light window with a segmental panel enclosed in the central section. Above this window, on the second story, a door opens onto the balcony.

The rhythm and arrangement of the fenestration and curves of the exterior do much to reveal interior arrangements. Remodelled in 1963 by Fleck and Lewis of Hanover for use as a library, every attempt was made to carefully preserve interior embellishments while adapting the structure for its new use. The richly carved stairway of natural quartered oak with twisted balusters and an exposed underside showing treads and risers dominates the entrance hall which is also adorned by large fluted Corinthian columns. Natural woodwork is evident throughout the house, in door surrounds and cornices, articulated in various classically derived moldings including raised ovals, cornice mutules with drilled holes, cabled flute, modillion, egg & dart, Gothic-inspired and fret moldings. The curved bay on the south elevation reveals on the interior an elegant oval-shaped room with panelled mahogany wainscoting, a cornice and ceiling of ornate sculptured plaster relief work. Ornate chimneypieces and mantels are located in every room and include elaborate carved wood swan's neck pediments and eared frames in the entrance hall and in the oval room, once a dining room which also features a matching built-in hutch adorned by Ionic pilasters. Delicate Federal-style mantelpieces of painted wood with ramsheds,

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urns, swags and insets of marble and brick are located in the reference room and children's room respectively. Mantels with decorative tile details adorn the rooms previously used as bedrooms upstairs. Located on the third floor is a small ballroom, currently not used.

Situated at the rear, the original carriage house was converted to serve as the Library Arts Center in 1967. The single story clapboarded structure is situated broadside to the drive and measures three bays wide. Centered on the facade, the large pedimented archway rises the full height of the structure, punctuating the slate truncated hip roof in dormer-like fashion. Pilasters featuring exaggerated entasis and full entablatures support the broken pediment with a dentil course and pearl molding adorning the raking cornice. Recessed in the arched opening, framed by panelled pilasters, is a semicircular multi-light window with a wide center mullion, below which the original double door to the barn has been replaced by a panelled wall. A concrete ramp runs in front of this former door. The archway was originally flanked on each side by a doublehung window with one over one sash, removed over the years for garage doors whose openings are now filled with panelled pieces of the same size. Two pedimented roof dormers with 6/6 doublehung windows are located on all but the front slope. The main roof was originally crowned by a balustrade as were the single story flat roofed extensions of the north and south sides. The north wing features a recessed double door entrance sheltered by a porch with Roman Doric columns. that on the south side features a wooden door with a four light upper panel. Small square four light windows light the first floor on all elevations except the facade. Set on a site sloping downward to the west, the brick basement level is exposed on the west elevation. The west elevation basement level features a central flat roofed projection and large brick arched openings, now filled with large sliding glass doors. On the floor above, a central wide panelled door is flanked by two square windows on each side. A shed section extends from the south side of the basement. Visible from the west is an octagonal cupola with arched openings, filled with the wooden vent louvers and capped by a domical vault roof and finial.

Fronting the town common as part of a residential neighborhood adjacent to the Main Street business district to the south, the Richards Library is a visual and historic anchor in the Newport Historic district. The house is set on a large level grassy lawn with yews, eunonymus and various other shrubs clustered around it. A variety of substantial trees including hemlocks, sugar maples and white pines are scattered on the lot with a proliferation of pines standing between the library lawn and the Library Arts Center. A concrete drive at the north side of the library originates at Main Street and curves behind the library, leading to the Arts Center with a curved section connecting to Pearl Street to the southwest. A sidewalk extends at the front of the lot, joined by a concrete path leading to the library's central entrance. A decorative wood sign on a metal post is located southwest of the main walk with a display window of wood located further south near the sidewalk and a wood sign on a wood post advertising the Library Arts Center, located near the drive.

Colonel Seth Mason Richards (1850-1910) who built the house, was a fourth generation descendant of one of Newport's wealthiest and most generous families. Prominent in state politics, Colonel Richards served as a state representative and senator for Newport as well as a member of the Governor's Council. His father, Dexter Richards, owner of the local Sugar River Mills was one of the town's greatest benefactors, donating the Richards Free Library and the Richards School to the town as well as erecting the formidable Richards Block on Main Street. The mark Seth Richards and his wife Lizzie left on the town is evidenced in the rebuilt Richards Block (after fire destroyed the original), the South Church Parsonage, and his own home, one of the most notable private

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residences in the state. The donation of the house by Mrs. D. Sidney Rollins, the second daughter of Seth Richards, to the Library Trustees in 1963 is the latest expression of the Richards Family's generosity to the Town of Newport and in particular of their ongoing commitment to a local library. By the 1960's the town's original library building, erected in 1888 and donated by Dexter Richards, had become inadequate for modern library requirements. Located on Main Street, south of the present library, it was demolished in 1963 to make room for the Sugar River Savings Bank.

8. Significance

| Period | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> law | <input type="checkbox"/> science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> economics | <input type="checkbox"/> literature | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900– | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | | |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Specific dates | 1898-1899 | Builder/Architect | Hira R. Beckwith/James T. Kelly |
|-----------------------|-----------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Designed by Boston architect, James T. Kelley, the Richards Free Library (originally the Seth Richards House) is an outstanding example of the Colonial Revival style, in a region where such expressions of opulence are relatively rare. Two years in construction from 1898 to 1899, the house was built during a period of great prosperity by one of Newport's wealthiest citizens. Richards was one of the few in the area able to afford the services of a metropolitan architect of Kelley's reputation. Kelley (d. 1929) is remembered as the designer of a number of public buildings in Boston, distinguished homes in the Back Bay and other town and country residences. The credentials of local builder, Hira R. Beckwith of Claremont are equally impressive. Serving as the architect of the Newport Town Hall and Courthouse and builder for countless other public and private structures in the area, Beckwith was considered the leading builder/architect of Sullivan County in his day.

Responding to post-Centennial zeal and renewed antiquarian interest, such Colonial Revival structures are in part the result of a search by turn of the century architects for an American style of architecture reflecting the national past. Expressive of the burgeoning interest in "Colonial" architecture, the building was designed prior to the publication in the 1920's of works by Fiske Kimball and other scholars, who for the first time distinguished between the Georgian, Federal and Greek Revival styles. As is evident here, architects of the turn of the century freely combined classical elements often with limited understanding of the precedents which they borrowed. The Richards Library is typical of the best of its period with its profusion of elaborate details including classical moldings, Palladian windows, sidelights and lunettes derived from a variety of styles especially the Georgian, but combined in a decidedly contemporary fashion. Indicative of the overblown tendency of Colonial Revival structures are the multitude of dormer windows, the larger scale of the house as compared to its colonial counterparts and the fact that symmetry is relegated only to the facade.

The Richards Library remains a unique example of Neo-Colonial architecture which seems to stand alone in terms of sophistication for its period when compared to other structures in the region. According to the Granite Monthly of May 1900, the Richards House was "one of the most elegant and costly homes in the state".¹

Contemporary with the Richards Home is the C.M. Emerson Residence (now the Moose Lodge) on North Main Street in Newport, constructed in 1898-1899 and designed by Boston architects Wilson and Webber. A clapboarded structure above a granite base and featuring conical towers and some colonial Revival details including swags, it remains a far less sophisticated example of Neo-Colonial architecture as compared to the Richards House of the exactly same period. In light of Queen Anne structures such as the Emerson House which continued to be favored even at the turn of the century, evidence suggests that the Richards Library is a rather early exercise in the Colonial Revival in this area. Several rather naive Colonial Revival structures constructed in 1901 in nearby Lebanon at 94 and 98 Bank Street are illustrative of the less exacting structures being designed by local architects during the same period, further enhancing the importance of the Richards Library.

¹ Metcalf, H.H. "A Prosperous Industry and Its Manager", Granite Monthly 28 (May 1900):p.313

9. Major Bibliographical References

Argust Champion: 7/22/1898; 11/17/1899; 12/3/1899; 11/15/1962; 3/28/1963; 4/25/1963

Edes, Samuel H. Tales from the History of Newport. Newport: Argust Champion, 1963.
(see continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1.4 acres

Quadrangle name Sunapee, N.H.

Quadrangle scale 1:625 000

UMT References

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| Zone | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | | | |

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Verbal boundary description and justification The nominated property occupies lot 386 On Map 43 in the tax assessor's records with frontage of 150' and an average depth of 365'.
(The library parcel also included the adjacent lots to the north: lot 639 with frontage of 107' and lot 1198 bordered on the north by Belknap Ave. and measuring 71.6'x170'. cont...

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 Lisa B. Mausolf, Preservation Specialist

organization Upper Valley - Lake Sunapee Council date 4/9/84

street & number 314 National Bank Building telephone (603) 448-1680

city or town Lebanon state New Hampshire 03766

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.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Director, Division of Parks and Recreation
title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

date 7/28/84

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

Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the National Register

date 9-7-84

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE continued:

The installation of vinyl siding and the removal of much of the original balustrading barely diminish the building's overall integrity; important elements could certainly be restored. Conversion from private residence to public library has been handled with extreme sensitivity, preserving what was in its time considered one of the most elegant and costly homes in the state.

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (continued):

Metcalf, H.H. "A Prosperous Industry and Its Manager",
Granite Monthly 28 (May 1900): 309-314.

Shelley, Betty. "Home of the Month", NH Profiles 16 (Jan.
1967): 46-52.

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BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary of the nominated property is drawn to include that acreage which survives from the original parcel upon Seth Mason Richards built his residence and which is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The adjacent vacant lot (#639) has been intentionally excluded as it is associated with the Edes Residence, (demolished in 1978) and was historically not part of the Richards property although it is currently owned by the library.

The nominated property has been highlighted in yellow on the attached sketch map.

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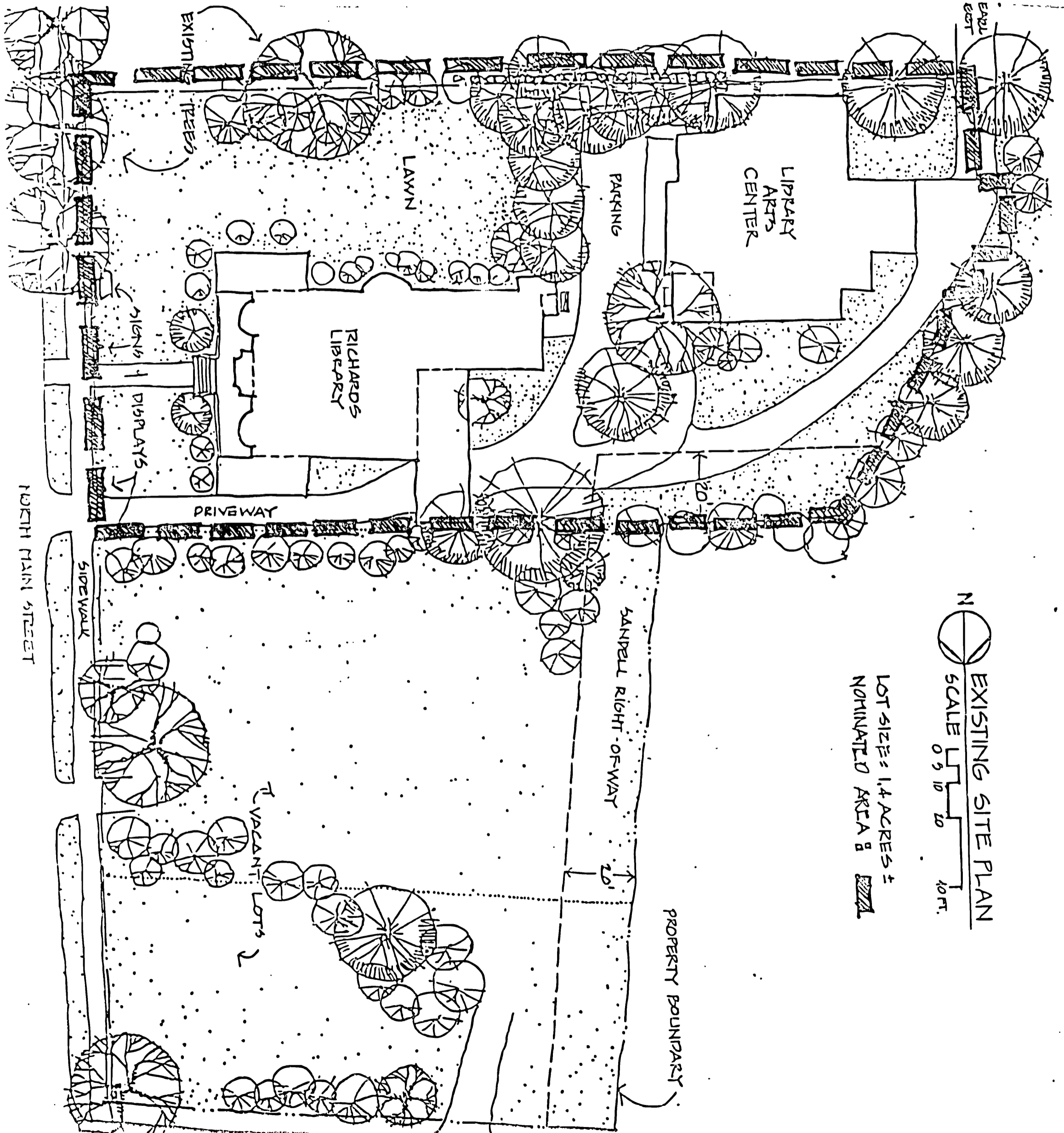
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N
 EXISTING SITE PLAN
 SCALE 1" = 10 FT.
 0 5 10 20 40 FT.

LOT SIZE: 1.4 ACRES ±
 NOMINATED AREA: [Hatched Box]