

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received NOV 5 1986  
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Carnegie Public Library (NeHBS # DS06-6)

and/or common Gothenburg Public Library

2. Location

street & number 1104 Lake Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Gothenburg N/A vicinity of

state Nebraska code 031 county Dawson code 047

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input 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	N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: library

4. Owner of Property

name City of Gothenburg

street & number City Hall, 409 9th Street

city, town Gothenburg N/A vicinity of state Nebraska 69138

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds, Dawson County Courthouse

street & number 7th and Washington

city, town Lexington state Nebraska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date On-going  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Nebraska State Historical Society

city, town Lincoln state Nebraska

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## 7. Description

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**Condition**  
\_\_\_ excellent    \_\_\_ deteriorated  
X good        \_\_\_ ruins  
\_\_\_ fair        \_\_\_ unexposed

**Check one**  
X unaltered  
\_\_\_ altered

**Check one**  
X original site  
\_\_\_ moved    date N/A

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Gothenburg Carnegie Public Library is located in Gothenburg, Nebraska, a small town situated approximately 24 miles west of Lexington, the county seat of Dawson County. The one-story-over-raised basement brick structure is ell-shaped in plan and features a clay tile roof with parapet gables, a corner vestibule entry and an abundant use of stone (terra cotta) trim used in the door and window surrounds, water table and copings. The library was constructed in 1915-16 with a grant from Andrew Carnegie. Structural and historical integrity has been preserved. This nomination includes one contributing building.

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The Gothenburg Carnegie Public Library is located on the north edge of the business district in Gothenburg (1980 pop.- 3,479), Nebraska, twenty-four miles west of the county set of Dawson County.

The building, erected in 1915-16, is a one-story-over-raised basement brick structure with a vestibule entrance set into the front (east) facade. The roof, covered with red clay tiles (original), has parapeted gables. The vestibule has "Carnegie Public Library 1915" carved in stone above the door. The grouped windows, with transoms, are single-paned. A prominent water table of cut stone divides the first floor and basement.

In 1960 a new floor was put in the library to carry the weight of the book stacks. In 1976 a new ceiling was put in on the first floor and all the windows repaired.

Architect M.N. Bair, who designed the building in 1914, incorporated many of the suggestions of the Carnegie Corporation for the floorplan of small libraries. The vestibule houses the stairways to the first floor and the basement. The first floor, one open room, houses the adult section of the library. Much of the original furnishings (tables, chairs, book cases, etc.) are still in use in this room. The circulation desk is located at the head of the stairs. The northern half of the basement encompasses one room. At first used as a community meeting room, it now contains the childrens section of the library. Originally open, this room has been partitioned on the east end making a work and storage area.

The building remains in use today as the city library, and has survived without any significant change to its floor plan or exterior appearance.

# 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 checked="" 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"/> 1900-1916	<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** 1915-1916 **Builder/Architect** J. W. Fauble/M. N. Bair

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Architecturally significant, the Gothenburg Carnegie Public Library represents a fine vernacular example of the Jacobethan Revival Style, being designed by local architect Moses N. Bair. The Jacobethan Revival was popular in Nebraska after the turn of the century. Significance in the area of social/humanitarian is derived from the library's association with Andrew Carnegie, often called the "Patron Saint" of libraries, who was responsible for funding the construction of libraries throughout the United States. The period of significance is derived from the original construction date of the building (1915-1916). This property gains significance on a state level.

Architecturally significant, the Gothenburg Carnegie Public Library exemplifies a modified version of the Jacobethan Revival Style of architecture, a style which was popular in the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In Nebraska, the style became evident after the turn of the century. "Although most Jacobethan designs may have been for houses, it was on educational architecture that the style had its greatest impact proportionally" (Whiffen, 1969, p. 181). The style is characterized by the use of brick and stone in construction, rectangular-shaped windows with transoms, gables rising above the roof line shaped in a steep-sided triangular form and prominent doorways, either enclosed within tabernacle frames or incorporating stonework to give a quoin-like effect. Although the Gothenburg Library follows, for the most part, the recommendations set forth by the Carnegie corporation in library design (one-story with raised basement, brick construction, small vestibule), its design becomes somewhat unique to libraries in Nebraska due to its ell-shaped plan (other libraries in the state follow the rectangular-shaped plan set forth by the corporation) and the Jacobethan detailing incorporated into the building design by architect Bair. In Nebraska, classical features were invariably used in library designs (see North Bend Carnegie Library-NeHBS # DD09-10, Scottsbluff Carnegie Library-NeHBS # SF11-10, Grand Island Carnegie Library-NeHBS # HLO6-2, Fairbury Public Library-NeHBS # JF04-22, and Beatrice Public Library-NeHBS # GA03-244, all of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places). The only other library building identified thus far, to be similar in design with the Gothenburg library is the

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one  
 Gothenburg, Nebraska

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	<u>14</u>	<u>402320</u>	<u>4531400</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

South 50 feet of Lots 11 and 12, Block 29, First Addition to Gothenburg, Dawson County, Nebraska, including all historically associated real estate.

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 Kieth Buss, Architectural Surveyor  
Joni Gilkerson, Architectural Historian--Technical Editor  
 organization Dawson County Historical Society  
Nebraska State Historical Society date April 1986  
805 North Taft 308/324-5340  
 street & number P.O. Box 82554 telephone 402/471-4767  
Lexington  
 city or town Lincoln state Nebraska

# 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 *James A. Hanson*  
 title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society date October 29, 1986

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

*Beth Grosvenor* date 12/9/86  
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Ashland Public (Carnegie) Library (NeHBS #SD01-53, NRHP), which also incorporates Jacobethan detailing in its design.

Little is known about architect M.N. Bair. He practiced in Hastings from 1909 to 1915 and was Hastings City Engineer from 1913 to 1914. Besides the Gothenburg Public Library no other structures are known that were designed by him.

Significance is also derived in the area of social/humanitarian for the library's association with Andrew Carnegie, a great philanthropist, who offered his famous grants for the construction of library buildings. These grants (1898-1921) played a significant role in library history, providing communities with the opportunity to establish their own public libraries. Mr. Carnegie funded the construction of 1679 libraries in the United States, their value totaling over 40 million dollars. (Chatfield, 1981, p.8-1,2), Carnegie's assistance to cities for library buildings included stipulations stating that the community must authorize continuing tax funds for library operation, the community be required to own the site and approve an annual tax levy equal to a certain percent of the Carnegie gift for library support. These requirements helped to insure that the city would continue the library's support. After 1908, library design plans were required to be submitted to Carnegie for approval. This was to prevent non-professional plans, and encourage simplicity with decorative elements being kept to a minimum. The Carnegie Corporation, in 1911, published a leaflet defining the approved design ideas of the library profession to aid communities and architects in library projects (Chatfield, 1981, p.8-2).

Around 1890 Gothenburg, with the construction of a canal and reservoir to supply electrical power, entered a boom period. During this time, in 1892, a Library Association was formed and two rooms were rented on the second floor of the newly completed opera house. One room was a library and the other a reading room. Much of the support for this library, including books, came from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It was also Milwaukee parties who had financially supported the construction of the canal and reservoir. After the Panic of 1893, when this outside support ceased, the Gothenburg library was forced to close its doors because of lack of local support. This despite the fact that German and Swedish newspapers and books had been included in its collections as a bid for local support.

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It was only during the early 20th Century when local interest in a library and a grant from the Carnegie Corporation were combined that a permanent public library was made possible for Gothenburg. In 1913 local support for a public library came to a peak. The City Council levied 3 mills for library support, a Carnegie grant was applied for, a library board was established, and a site found. Then problems developed. The Carnegie Corporation had stipulated that cost of the library building not be over \$7,000.00. It was only after architect W.F. Gernandt of Omaha had drawn up plans and the contract for construction had been let to John H. Teed of Gibbon for \$6,850.00 that the library board realized that the building planned could not possibly be built for \$7,000.00. A new architect, Morse N. Bair of Hastings, was engaged and this time plans were worked out more carefully with the Carnegie Corporation. The plans were also reviewed by the Secretary of the State Library Commission. In the spring of 1915 the construction contract was let, this time to J.W. Fauble of Grand Island, and work was begun. On March 3, 1916 the building was formally opened to the public.

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Whiffen, Marcus, American Architecture Since 1780, A Guide to the Styles, the M.I.T. Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass., 1969.