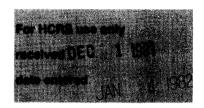
# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



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

1. Nam	ne					
historic Har	court Wood Me	morial Libr	ary			
and/or common	Derby Publ	ic Library				
2. Loca	ation					
street & number	313 Elizabe	th Street			not for publication	
city, town De	erby	vi	cinity of	congressional district	5th	
state Conne	ecticut	code 09	county	New Haven	code 009	
3. Clas	sification					
Category district _X_ building(s) structure site object	Ownership  X public  private  both  Public Acquisition  in process  being considere	Accessible yes: re	cupied in progress le	Present Use agriculture./ commercial educational entertainment government industrial military	museum park private residence religious scientific transportation other:	
4. <b>Own</b>	er of Prop	erty				
	of Derby					
street & number	35 Fifth St	root				
city, town Derby			cinity of	state	state Connecticut	
<del></del>	ation of Le				- Connecticut	
		erby Land R				
street & number	35 Fifth St		,	323, 1341		
		1666			Connecticut	
	<sub>erby</sub> resentatio	n in Exi	stina	SILVAVS	Connecticut	
от пер	Cocintatio	TI III EXI	311119	oui reys		
title State F	Register of Hi	storic Plac	: <b>e</b> ை this pro	operty been determined e	legible? yes _X no	
date 1982		-		federal <u>X</u> sta	ate county local	
depository for su	irvey records Con	necticut Hi	storica	1 Commission		
city, town	Hartford			state	Connecticut	

### 7. Description

Condition excellent deteriorated good ruins fair unexposed	altered	Check one  X original site moved date	
--	---------	---------------------------------------	--

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

#### Overview

The Derby Public Library is a two-story, granite ashlar building in the Colonial Revival style of architecture with broad Flemish gables. (Photograph 1.) The library has retained its original appearance and original furnishings with very few changes since the time it was built in 1902 to the design of architect Hartley Dennett of Boston.

The site of the Derby Public Library is a triangular plot of land at the point where Elizabeth and Caroline streets come together, several blocks north of the city's central business district. The ground slopes off to the rear and one side of the library, permitting a basement entrance at grade on Caroline Street. The library grounds are landscaped with lawn and shrubbery. The surrounding neighborhood in general has a 19th-century residential character but includes several 20th-century schools and religious institutions. (See Street Map.)

### Exterior

The library is almost square in plan, 59 feet wide by 57 feet deep. It faces north, toward the intersection of Elizabeth and Caroline streets. The walls are quarry-faced granite laid up in random ashlar, tapering from three feet thick at the bottom to two feet thick at the top. The interior construction is steel frame and reinforced concrete.

The library's triangular front yard is approached from Elizabeth Street by a walk, and from Elizabeth Street by curving granite steps that lead up through a granite retaining wall, to the front porch. The 17 by 10-foot porch has three granite steps on all three sides. On the front there are two slender, wooden columns on either side of a central space, with two more columns and an engaged half-column on each side. The columns stand on shallow plinths and have acanthus-leaf capitals that support a plain architrave and frieze. The frieze carries the lettering DERBY PUBLIC LIBARY in bronze. The corona above has mutules with guttae.

The floor of the porch is concrete with panels left and right of round glass in serts, (to light a room in the basement). Original iron lanterns flank the doorway. The doorway consists of a wide door with side lights under a broad, semi-elliptical fanlight. Four colonettes similar to the columns stand in front of pilasters to define the doorway and side lights. The leaded side lights are divided into small square panes, three wide and 17 high. The leaded fanlight has central radial muntins flanked by circles and half-circles. The screen door, a replacement, is made of teak as is the original 44-inch-wide front door. The door has two vertical, recessed panels.

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Continuation sheet

Derby Public Library, Derby, CT Surveys Item number

6



Page 1

Derby Historic Resources Inventory

Date 1978

Local X

Connecticut Historical Commission

Hartford

Connecticut

## National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Derby Public Library, Derby, CT

Continuation sheet Description

Item number

7



Page 1

The large front windows left and right of the porch are appropriately scaled to the size of the porch. Each window has three sash, 15-over-15, with molded jambs and lintel and plain wood sill. The side lights, one pane wide, are 3-over-3-over-3. A granite water table runs under the windows, and below it there is a horizontal, five-pane basement window under each of the large windows.

Above the porch a pedimented gable projects from the roof. Spherical finials are supported on piers at the ends of the gable. In the tympanum there is a recessed round arch over a Palladian window with four Ionic pilasters. The Spanish tile that cover the roof have rounded ends. The tile are essentially flat, about 5½" x 11½", with a lip turning down at the front, that makes them look thick, and a lip turning up at the back, that is part of the scheme for holding the tile in place. (Photograph 2.) The tile have proven to be troublesome over the years because the front lips tend to crack; ice and water then get under the tile and cause leaks in the roof. As they cannot be replaced, tile from the front and back gables have been removed for use on the main roof and the gables are now covered with asphalt shingles.

In the west elevation, facing Elizabeth Street, there are five basement windows of two rows of five panes, below the water table. In the main floor, the central tripartite window has an unusual, vertical version of the 6-over-6 pattern; the sash have three rows of two lights rather than the customary two rows of three lights. On each side of the tripartite window are two 15-over-15 windows. All lights are the same size.

The second floor of the west elevation is dominated by three 15-over-15 windows under 15-light transoms, the whole being unusually large. There is a molded cornice at the top. At each side, level with the bottom of the big window, there is an oval window, vertically oriented, with radial muntins.

The building's most distinctive feature is its Flemish gables, as seen at the top of the west elevation. The half-round apex rests on steps that support sphere finials, followed by quarter-round sections and additional finials. The coping of each of the rounded sections is a single thickness of granite shaped to fit the curve. (Photograph 3.)

The east elevation is three stories high, because of the exposed basement. (Photograph 4.) The central basement doorway resembles the front doorway as it has side lights and a semi-elliptical fanlight, but differs in that the door has six panels and more of the relieving arch of heavy voussoirs over the fanlight is visible. Windows with 10-over-10 sash are to left and right of the doorway. Above them the granite projection that on the facade served as a water table now appears as a string course.

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Derby Public Library, Derby, CT
Continuation sheet Description Item number



Page 2

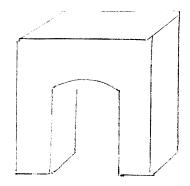
At the first-floor level there is a wooden bay window that consists of four sections of 6-over-6 sash under four-light transoms. The sash are two panes wide by three high and open by pivoting on a central support. The bay window has a molded cornice. There are 15-over-15 windows to left and right. The second floor repeats the large tripartite window arrangement of the west elevation without the flanking oval windows. The gable end is a Flemish gable, the same as on the west elevation.

7

The rear (south) elevation, because of the sloping ground, is three stories high at the east (Caroline Street) and two stories high at the west (Elizabeth Street). At the east there is a 10-over-10 window with side lights, now largely obscured by a modern wooden shed. The basement then projects to the south to form what was initially the coal bunker. The roof of the coal bunker is a porch or approach from Elizabeth Street to the central doorway of the rear (south) elevation.

Six granite steps lead up to the south doorway which has a paneled double door like the front door. The entrance is recessed and the sides and soffit of the recess are paneled. Side lights are three panes wide and six high. The principal windows flanking the doorway are 15-over-15-over-15, like those on the facade. At the second floor, the Palladian window and gable also are like those on the front.

Originally, the library had two furnaces, one for each floor, and two chimneys that emerged on the south slope of the roof close together and were bridged at the top.



The roof flashing at the bases of the emerging chimneys proved to be a troublesome source of leaks. In an effort to deal with this problem the entire chimney structure in recent years was enclosed in aluminum, and now appears as a single stack. (Photograph 5.)

## National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Derby Public Library, Derby, CT
Continuation sheet Description Item number



Page 3

### Interior

The vestibule (see floor plan) has a floor of red tile with inset symbols in various colors, while its walls are paneled in the teak wood used throughout the library first floor, and the ceiling is coffered. A former central light fixture is missing, one of the very few pieces of original furnishings to have been removed. The double door from the vestibule to the lobby is glazed with six square amber lights in each leaf. Over the door is the dedication plaque.

The lobby is the library's formal, central space. The circulation desk with segmental curved front is on the right, flanked by entrances to the children's library and to the stacks. The entrance to the general reading room is on the left. Straight ahead the wall is fitted with bookcases centered on a tall clock, with curving steps to a door on the left. The ceiling areas between the beams are completely gilded with gold leaf while the sides and soffits of the beams and the borders of the wall spaces above the entrances to the other rooms are stenciled with a gilt pattern that features signs of the zodiac and mythological symbols. (Photograph 6.) The lower portions of the walls are sheathed with vertical teak, channeled and beaded. The molded horizontal member at the top of the wooden sheathing extends to become the lintels of the doorways and the cornice of the bookcase.

Narrow stairs entered at the front of the lobby south of the vestibule lead up to the second floor. The corresponding space on the north of the vestibule is a closet, apparently always has been, and in this respect the drawing is incorrect. The furnishings in the lobby, including the light fixtures and the stools, are original.

The general reading room has six-tier book shelves on three walls and a fireplace on the fourth. Due to the thickness of the exterior walls, the window seats are unusually deep. The large central window on the east wall does not show in the floor plan. As there is no tradition or record of this window being added, it is supposed that the design was changed prior to construction. The large oak plank tables are supported by curule-type legs. The ladderback chairs have a dark finish. The fireplace has a brick fire box and flat teak shelf with tile surround and hearth.

The glazed double door leading to the reference room is fitted with large brass pull handles and plates. The fireplace surround and hearth in this room are brick, and Windsor chairs in a dark finish are placed around the table. The shelving on three walls is fitted with an ingenious arrangement of notches that work with beveled edges of the shelves to make the height of the shelves adjustable.

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Derby Public Library, Derby, CT

Continuation sheet Description Item number 7



Page

The children's room resembles the general reading room with similar fireplace, but the chairs and table are on a smaller scale. (Photograph 7.) The mantel shelf continues the horizontal level of the top of the book cases in a fashion comparable to the extension of the top of the paneling in the lobby as the doorway lintels.

The ceilings in the general reading room and the children's room, about 14 feet high, articulate the structural iron girders, cased in plaster. The floors are now carpeted over the original cork.

The doors to the stacks from the lobby and from behind the circulation desk, sheathed with leather that is brass studded, have leaded glazing and large brass pull handles. There are three stack levels, the middle level with an opaque glass floor, connected by a metal stairway and a dumb waiter.

The basement initially was occupied by the furnace room, a small museum, and storage space. It is not a full basement as the lowest level of the stacks takes some of the space although the stack floor is about five feet above the basement floor. In 1974 the former museum and storage areas were opened and remodelled into a new and larger children's department, named in honor of Harold Bacon who served for many years as president of the library board.

The children's department has its own entrance at grade from Caroline Street to a modern foyer leading to the principal space that is now equipped with metal shelves under a dropped ceiling. (Photograph 8.)

The entrance to the second floor of the library, the audience room, is the doorway on the south elevation. Inside the door a spacious stairway rises in three runs of eight risers each, in front of the Palladian window. The stairway is of reinforced concrete construction with an iron railing, wooden handrail and iron newel posts with round brass finials.

The audience room is well lighted by the large banks of windows in each gable end. (Photograph 9.) The side walls of the room separate it from the spaces under the lower slopes of the roof used for storage, toilets, and the like. The roof framing of massive timbers may be observed from these spaces. The timber framing rests on I beams. The audience room was used for decades for lectures and similar events. It was heated by a separate furnace that has now been removed. The audience room now is not heated and is used only for storage.

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Derby Public Library, Derby, CT

Continuation sheet Description

Item number

7



Page 5

1.

The roof is constructed of reinforced concrete. Due to its deteriorated condition, the helical iron reinforcing rods are visible from the interior.

2.

The wood is identified as teak in the description of the building published by the Derby Sentinel April 22, 1901.

3.

The brass plaque reads as follows:

THIS BUILDING WAS ERECTED

BY HIS PARENTS

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

HOLTON HARCOURT WOOD

BORN JUNE 19, 1885 DIED FEBRUARY 27, 1897

4.

Lettering that encircles the lobby at the top of the walls reads, "The glory of the world would perish in oblivion if God had not provided mortals with the remedies of books. Towers crumble to the earth, but he whose book lives cannot die. O Books, ye only are liberal and free who pay tribute to all who ask it, enfranchise all who serve you faithfully -- Richard de Bury".

5.

Condition of the Windsor chairs has deteriorated and they are in need of maintenance. The ladder back chairs are in better but not good condition, while the tables are solid and firm. None of the furniture carries the mark or name of a maker.

### 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below						
1400-1499 1500-1599 1600-1699 1700-1799 1800-1899	archeology-prehistoric archeology-historic agriculture architecture art commerce communications	conservation conservation conservation conservation conservation conservation/settlement	andscape architecture alors al	e religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation Local History			
Specific dates	1902	Ruilder/Architect Ha	rtley Dennett	<b>_</b>			

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

### Criteria

The Derby Public Library has outstanding integrity as an example of turn-of-the-century Colonial Revival architecture executed in granite and as an example of post-Victorian-era trends in interior design. (Criterion C.) The library has significance in local history because it was constructed and furnished through the philanthropy of a Derby citizen who made his fortune in the street railway industry. (Criterion A.)

### History

H. Holton Wood (1857-1912), the donor of the Derby Public Library, was born in Montreal, Canada. After graduating from McGill University, he pursued his interests in the field of electricity in the United States, in 1883 becoming manager of the Staten Island Rapid Transit Co. Four years later, in 1887, Wood purchased an interest in the Derby Street Railway, said to be the first to be operated in New England. In rapid sequence he became president of the Derby Street Railway, Chairman of the Derby Board of Education, president of the Derby and Shelton Board of Trade, a director of the Ousatonic (sic) Water Co. and president of the Home Trust Co. He also represented Derby in the Connecticut General Assembly. In 1897 he left Derby and moved to Brookline, Massachusetts.

Derby had long been in need of a public library. A free reading room had been instituted in 1868, and the movement for a library gained strength in the 1890s. Then, on January 24, 1901, Wood wrote from Brookline to the mayor offering to donate the land and building for a library and \$5000 toward the cost of books if the city would match the \$5000 for books and undertake the responsibility for maintaining and operating the library.

The offer was enthusiastically accepted. Wood secured the plans from Boston architect Hartley Dennett and construction was put in hand. Dedication took place on December 27, 1902, 2 and the library opened on February 13, 1903 with approximately 5000 volumes. Derby ceased to be the only city in the state without a free circulating library. 3

The Beardsley Building Co. was general contractor, using white granite from nearby Ansonia. The fireproof construction was considered quite progressive for the times. G. P. Alling of Ansonia was the painting contractor and Howard and Barber Co. of Derby supplied the interior

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Da	ita UM NOT VENERO
Acreage of nominated property0.5  Quadrangle name _Ansonia  UMT References	Quadrangle scale
A 18 6 5 9 9 3 0 4 5 7 6 5 6 Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing
C	
	scribed in the Derby Land Records, volume 84, e plot is the original boundary.
List all states and counties for properties	s overlapping state or county boundaries
state code	county code
state code	county code
organization Architectural His street & number 33 Sunrise Hill city or town West Hartford	
12. State Historic Pr	reservation Officer Certification
	nin the state is: local  Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89- ion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated
according to the criteria and procedures set for State Historic Preservation Officer signature	rth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.
title Director, Connecticut Historica	al Commission date November 23, 1981
For HCRS use only I hereby certify that this property is included the following the fo	ded in the National Register Entered in the National Register date //4/82
Chief of Registration	

## National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Derby Public Library, Derby, CT

Continuation sheet

Significance

Item number

8



Page 1

furnishings, which they purchased from various unspecified manufacturers. Unfortunately, the sources of only two items of the furnishings are known. The clock was made by the Walter H. Durfee Co. of Providence, Rhode Island, and the tile in the fireplace hearths and surrounds are the work of H. C. Mercer of Doylestown, Pa.

Wood paid \$6,411 for the land, \$45,000 for the building, and contributed \$5000 toward books, a total gift of \$56,411. The city and local people contributed a further \$10,000 toward books (and gave books to the library, as well) for a total cost of land, building and contents of about \$65,000.

The first librarian was Grace A. Child, who was appointed in 1902 while the library was under construction and held the post to 1911. She was followed by Minnie B. Cotter, 1911-1918, Emma M. Lessey, 1918-1947 (she joined the library staff in 1902), Agnes Kennedy, 1947-1961 (she joined the library staff in 1907), and Helen G. Ahearn, 1961-present (she joined the staff in 1953). The stability of the staff is in step with the stability of the structure.

The audience room on the second floor long was used for meetings and lectures. William Lyon Phelps gave a course there in 1912. "Library Hall was filled," the <u>Sentinel</u> reported. The proceeds of the lectures went towards the purchase of new books. Over the years the room was used for such varied purposes as high school proms and dancing classes, but interest in use of the room gradually diminished to the point where it was not used at all for meetings, and it now provides much-needed storage space.

By 1974 the library possessed 46,225 books with a daily average circulation of 271, down from previous years. By the end of 1979 the number of books had grown to 47,964, but average daily circulation had dropped further to 218. Total circulation in 1964 was 114,508, in 1974 79,375, and in 1980-81 63,505.

#### Architecture

Little is known about Hartley Dennett, H. Holton Wood's architect from Boston. The American Architect and Building News published his work on two occasions. In the January 7, 1899 edition the magazine printed a double spread of Dennett's design for the Shattuck Prize competition (not further identified) for workers' housing. The design is a perspective drawing of 5 to 7 room brick houses with gambrel roofs and dormers built continuously around a city block, with suggestion of recreational development of the central land.

Continuation sheet

## United States Department of the Interior Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Derby Public Library, Derby, CT Significance Item number



Page 2

In the August 15, 1903 issue <sup>7</sup> the plan of the main floor of the Derby library is printed together with exterior and interior photographs. The photographs are useful in demonstrating how little the structure and its furnishings have changed, even to the lanterns flanking the front door and the stools in the lobby.

In view of the paucity of background information about Dennett, the Derby library must speak for the man. It shows that he was well aware of the architectural trends of his time and was resourceful in combining pleasant features into a functional building.

Whether Colonial Revival is the proper term for the architectural style is debatable. Neo-Georgian might be more appropriate for the columned porch and entrance with side lights and fanlight. The point is that after the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the revival styles popular earlier in the 19th century were out and an eclectic treatment of motifs drawn from classical architecture was in. Dennett articulated the current eclectic trend by combining the porch, entrance and window details of the Georgian era with Flemish gables from an entirely different source and capped the whole with Spanish tile. The use of the Flemish or Dutch-type gables suggests the influence of the Hudson River Valley where Dutch colonial influence was strong, and the influence of Richard Norman Shaw, leader of the English version of the Queen Anne style. The architect demonstrated his awareness of new technical developments by the use of steel-frame and reinforced concrete construction for much of the building, although in some respects with less than total success. reinforcing rods are too big, not placed right, and are the wrong shape, as can be seen in the coal bunker roof. Also, the tile of the roof and the chimney flashing have been on-going problems.

The interior design and furnishings combine two contemporary trends. The lobby is different from the other rooms. In the lobby the learned quotation and mythological symbols, executed in gold leaf, establish a formal tone that is consistent with the clock wall, which itself reflects the influence of H.H. Richardson who two decades earlier had brought a new approach to library design.

The solid materials and strightforward shapes and forms of the balance of the rooms, on the other hand, are in the manner of the American Arts and Crafts movement popularized by Gustav Stickley in his magazine The Craftsman, that he did not begin to publish until 1901. The Derby Library rooms are an early example of the principles that formed the basis of the Arts and Crafts movement. The prominent use of dark wood for the walls, the horizontal line that continued from one element to another as the top of the book cases to the mantel shelf, and the broad fireplace surrounds of tile are all Craftsman themes. The furniture in oak, solid and "honest," is

## National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Derby Public Library, Derby, CT

Continuation sheet

Significance

Item number

8



Page 3

typical Stickley work. Its continuous use for 80 years is testimony to the quality of its craftsmanship.

The eclectic exterior and interior of the Derby Public Library, both well done, remain today with complete integrity as a demonstration of turn-of-the-century architecture, a successful exercise of philanthropy by one of the city's successful business men.

1. Ploski, p. 1.

2.

The library was given in memory of Harcourt Wood, son of H. Holton Wood, who died February 27, 1897 at the age of 12. The Derby Land Records state that a condition of the gift was that "Said library building shall be designated and known as The Harcourt Wood Memorial Library." -- DLR 84/95, December 27, 1902.

3. Ploski, p. 3.

4.

The Sarah Riggs Humphreys Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, met in the library hall from the time it was built to about 1970. Malloy, p. 78, states that, "The ground on which the Harcourt Wood memorial stands had been given to Sarah Riggs Humphreys Chapter, D.A.R., for a permanent home, and this organization deeded it to the city with the proviso that there should always be a room set apart for the society's needs." No confirmation of this account could be found in the Derby Land Records. The Land Records show that Wood purchased the land in two parcels from an estate in a straightforward manner. See DLR 80/231 and 80/321.

5.
Dennett does not appear in the standard biographical dictionaries or obituary indexes. He is listed in the Boston city directory for 1905 but not for 1895 or 1915.

6. A.A.B.N., v. 63, p. 7, plate 1202.

7. A.A.B.N., v. 81, p. 55, plate 1442.

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Derby Public Library, Derby, CT

Continuation sheet Significance Item number

Page 4

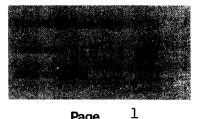
<sup>7.</sup> Some of the same rods appear as spindles in an exterior railing.

<sup>8.</sup>The clock in Richardson's Billings Library (1883) at Burlington, Vermont, is a forerunner of the Derby Library clock.

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

Derby Public Library, Derby, CT Continuation sheet Bibliography

Item number



Page

Derby Land Records

Molloy, Leo T., comp., <u>Tercentenary Pictorial and History of the Lower Naugatuck Valley</u>, Ansonia: Press of the Emerson Bros., Inc., 1935.

Ploski, Bernadette, "The Derby Public Library," paper for course at St. Joseph College, 1975.

Scrap Book of clippings from the Derby Sentinel from 1901, at the library.

Q

Derby Public Library Derby, CT Floor Plan Photo Key Scale: 1" = 8.3'

PORCH. `Q CHILDRENS LIBRARY <u>|-</u> ST. Ŋ CAROLIN ELIZA BETH グニニュ



®

