

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received JAN 30 1984  
date entered

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

1. Name

historic WASHBURN FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY  
and/or common WASHBURN PUBLIC LIBRARY (preferred) ✓

2. Location

street & number ~~Corner of~~ Washington Avenue <sup>and W.</sup> & 3rd Street West not for publication  
city, town Washburn vicinity of  
state Wisconsin code 55 county Bayfield code 007

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> 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
	* N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name City of Washburn  
street & number 307 Washington Avenue  
city, town Washburn vicinity of state Wisconsin

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Bayfield County Courthouse  
street & number 117 E. Fifth Street  
city, town Washburn state Wisconsin

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Wis. Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
date 1975  federal  state  county  local  
depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 816 State Street  
city, town Madison state Wisconsin

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<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 _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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

The Washburn Public Library is a coursed, rock-faced brownstone building of one story above a raised basement. The symmetrical, rectangular design is prefaced by a projecting front (east) portico, with tall Ionic columns, distyle in antis. The basement story is defined by a bold brownstone water-table matched to bracketed sills beneath the rectangular first-story windows. The hipped roof is intersected by the gabled portico at the front, and by the hipped stack section to the rear; all slopes are covered with composition shingles. The denticulated cornice and frieze along all walls and the portico are of wood.

The trio of windows to each side of the portico is joined by a continuous sill; on the end walls and rear, windows occur singly or in pairs. Smaller openings light the upper walls of the rear stack. Shorter, square windows in the basement story correspond to those on the first-story. Two of the three red brick interior chimneys correspond to fireplaces at the north and south ends of the interior, while a third, at the north hip of the roof, vents the boiler in the basement.

Typical of Carnegie libraries, the interior consists of a main floor with vestibule, adult and children's reading rooms in the wings, a central circulation desk and stack with auxiliary service and patron rooms to the sides. The lobby is framed by wide arches opening to the reading rooms and stack. The original brass lamps are still in place on the dark paneled oak circulation desk. Simple oak frames trim the window openings in the painted plaster walls. The red brick fireplaces have simple oak mantelshelves and brick hearths. Suspended florescent lights replace the original light fixtures, and the original cork flooring has been replaced with carpeting; otherwise the interior is unaltered, and includes the original brass-trimmed metal stacks, and oak reading tables and chairs.

A pair of dog-leg stairs descends to the basement, where a large meeting room occupies the center of the plan. The boiler room, club room (now storage), rest rooms, and smaller storage rooms are disposed to the north and south.

The library is located on a landscaped site in a residential area two blocks north of the former Washburn library (now city hall), and one block northeast of the business district.

# 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** 1904<sup>1</sup> **Builder/Architect** Henry Wildhagen<sup>2</sup>

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

The Washburn Public Library is architecturally significant as a fine local example of Neoclassical-period, Carnegie library-type, brownstone construction. The 1904 design by Ashland architect Henry Wildhagen also represents the work of a northern Wisconsin master.

A 1975 reconnaissance survey of the city of Washburn identified approximately one dozen well-preserved and distinctive buildings constructed of the region's high-quality brownstone, whose common use at the turn of the century testifies to the architectural significance of that era of construction, and to the historical importance of quarrying and shipping of the material. Exploiting the monumental and romantic potential of the stone, Washburn's finest examples were conceived in the Richardsonian Romanesque or Neoclassical veins. The Washburn Public Library is one of several examples of Neoclassicism, best represented locally by the Bayfield County Courthouse of 1894 (NRHP 1975). As a library building, the Washburn example joins some twenty-five other local libraries in Wisconsin, fourteen of them Carnegie-sponsored, to be recognized through National Register nomination.

The commission for designing Washburn's new library, like many of the civic commissions in northern Wisconsin at the time, was given to Henry Wildhagen. Perhaps best-known for his school designs, Wildhagen (1856-1920) was born in Hanover, Germany, and educated at the technical school of the University of Hanover.<sup>3</sup> At age thirty Wildhagen emigrated to the United States, and established a reputation for designing sulphate mills in the U.S. and Canada. In 1893 he established an office in Ashland with civil engineer Herman Rettinghaus. In independent practice his credits include the South Shore Public School, 1903, in Port Wing (NRHP 1978; demolished 1980); the Ashland (1904), Wilmarth (1895), Beaser (1899), and Ellis (1900) schools (NRHP 1980) in Ashland; and the Bayfield Carnegie Library (1903).

Construction of the Washburn library followed upon a period of marked growth and expansion in the city from 1883-1901. In 1883 the area was cleared and platted as the site of the principal lake terminal of the Chicago, St. Paul, Milwaukee, & Omaha Railroad.<sup>4</sup> The city's first reading room and library was organized in 1891, and in 1892-3, the first library building was planned and constructed. (The former library is now used as the city hall.) By 1902 its quarters were outgrown, and the library board resolved to request funds for a new building from the Carnegie foundation.<sup>5</sup> The gift of \$15,000 was made in 1903, supplemented by an additional \$3,000 request by the city in 1904.<sup>6</sup> The building was opened and dedicated in 1905.

The Washburn Public Library Board of Trustees currently hopes to prompt some minor repair and renewal of the building, after nearly eighty years of continuous service.

(continued)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Minutes of the Washburn Public Library Board of Directors, February 23, 1903; October 24, 1903; January 16, 1904; January 23, 1904; May 25, 1904; June 27, 1908; December 20, 1904; March 27, 1905; held at Washburn Public Library.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Washburn

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	5	6	6	1	0	0	0	5	1	7	0	7	3	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

Lots 9 and 10, Block 39, Townsite (now city) of Washburn.

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

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By (continued)

name/title Diane H. Filipowicz/Architectural Historian

organization State Historical Society of Wisconsin date July, 1983

street & number 816 State Street telephone (608) 262-2732

city or town Madison state Wisconsin

## 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 

title Director, Historic Preservation Division, SHSW

date JAN 25, 1984

### For NPS use only

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

Entered in the  
National Register

date

3/1/84

  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

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Washburn Public Library, Washburn, Bayfield County, Wisconsin

Continuation sheet

Item number

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Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup>Cornerstone

<sup>2</sup>Blueprints, held by Washburn Public Library; Historical Report of the Washburn Public Library, July 1, 1904.

<sup>3</sup>Ashland Daily Press, March 24, 1920

<sup>4</sup>William Francis Raney, Wisconsin, A Story of Progress, New York, 1940, p. 196.

<sup>5</sup>Washburn News and Itemizer, April 25, 1902.

<sup>6</sup>Minutes of meetings of the Washburn Public Library Board of Directors, June 27, 1904, December 20, 1904.

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

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



Washburn Public Library, Washburn, Bayfield County, Wisconsin

Continuation sheet

Item number 11

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FORM PREPARED BY

Research assistance by:

Kathleen Lee/President  
Washburn Public Library Board of Trustees  
P.O. Box 481  
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June 1982  
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