

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. ~~NATIONAL PARK SERVICE~~ Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Greensburg Carnegie Public Library

other names/site number Greensburg City Hall

2. Location

street & number 114 North Michigan Avenue N/A not for publication

city or town Greensburg N/A vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Decatur code 031 zip code 47240

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Paul R. Roberts 7/26/95
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Indiana Department of Natural Resources
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Edson H. Beall 6/9/95
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
Entered in the National Register

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal
- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: library
SOCIAL: meeting hall

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Neo-Classical Revival

foundation STONE: limestone

walls BRICK

STONE: limestone

roof CERAMIC TILE

other METAL: cast iron

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1904-1945

Significant Dates

1904

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Harris, William and Shopbell, Clifford

Pulse and Porter

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

National Register files

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

Greensburg Carnegie Public Library, 1904, stands on a triangular lot several blocks northwest of the courthouse square. The surrounding area is residential. The library faces south with a triangular front yard extending toward the intersection of Michigan Avenue and Jackson Street. The tan face brick and limestone trimmed building roughly approximates a Greek Cross in plan, with a portico projecting to the front, stacks to the rear, and reading room wings extending from the flanks, all capped by a central low saucer dome. The original plan has been altered by a modern addition at the northwest corner. A coursed rock-faced raised foundation with dressed water table is found on all elevations of the original building.

The main facade faces south and sets the harmonious Neo-Classical tone for the entire structure (photo 1). The main stairs rise to a tetrastyle Scamozzi Ionic pedimented portico with wider central intercolumniation. Flanking the stairs are retaining walls which have cast iron lantern-style light standards. The fluted limestone columns support a stone entablature with dentil mold and matching raking entablature for the pediment. The plain frieze is inscribed: "CARNEGIE PUBLIC LIBRARY". The tympanum is of brick and has an oculus with stone keystones and brick header surround. Behind the portico is an entrance foyer block which also projects from the main mass of the building and appears to have a flat roof with parapet. Brick Ionic pilasters carry the portico theme to this section. Centered in the brick wall is the main entrance, a double leaf doorway with stone with architrave molded jambs surmounted by a stone pediment resting on guilloche-enriched scroll consoles. The main doors themselves are an elaborate Art Nouveau-influenced design with leaded cut glass, with similar motifs in the transom. The stone tablet over the door reads: "1903" in raised numerals. Flanking the entrance are pilastered aediculae which act as surrounds for narrow windows.

The main mass of the building is stepped back and extends under a side gable roof. Centered in the basement level of each wing is a single window. Closely grouped narrow double hung windows divided by slender brick pilaster/mullion capped by a monolithic stone lintel. Corners are defined by brick pilasters and an entablature similar to that of the portico, with built-in cornice guttering, a common feature to all elevations. The red terra-cotta tile roof

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

**Greensburg Carnegie Public Library
Decatur County, Indiana**

is visible, as is a chimney to the west of the portico.

The east elevation is defined by a broad pedimented area with the side of the portico visible to the left (south) and the side of the rear stack wing visible to the right (north) (photo 3). The basement level has two openings. Pilasters define the main part, implying a temple format without being truly open. Pilasters are placed at the corners of this wing, and two are grouped close together toward the center. Within each of the two sections thus formed, there are triple window arrangements similar to the triple windows on the front. The broad pediment has a raking entablature with dentil mold, and a four-pane oculus similar to the main portico one is centered in the brick tympanum. The side of the rear stacks wing has less detail than the rest of the structure. The foundation level of the stacks section has several windows. Above this, a series of squarish double hung windows are aligned high on the wall, with the continuous lintel being nearly part of the entablature. The sill is continuous as well. One of the windows has been converted to a vent. Corners have pilasters.

The west elevation is very similar to the east elevation (photo 4). The main difference is that the two story 1965 addition is attached to the west face of the rear stacks section, obscuring the original wall. The rear of the stacks section has a temple-like format similar to the other sides, however, the pediment has a shallower pitch and the pilasters mark only the corners (photo 5). Six basement windows and six of the high set windows used on the side of this section are centered on the wall. The pediment has the same oculus, but the raking cornice lacks dentils.

Completing the exterior is the central octagonal drum and saucer dome, all covered in sheet metal work. The 1965 addition stands to the northwest, and consists of a modernistic (nearly Art Moderne in inspiration) flat roofed cube of tan brick and stone. The brick color blends well with the original brick. Only one opening is found on this addition: a single door with stairs at the southeast corner.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 & 8 Page 3

**Greensburg Carnegie Public Library
Decatur County, Indiana**

The interior of the Greensburg Library carries on the grand Neo-Classical Revival theme of the exterior. The plan is organized around the central octagonal space, with two rooms to the east and two to the west (each room corresponding to the triple window groups on the exterior of each side). Stacks extend to the north of the back of the circulation desk. The octagonal central space gives each room a complex shape and greatly enriches the interior. Typical finishes include round arched openings with keystones, stained oak woodwork for windows and other doorways, a chair rail and baseboard, and plaster walls and ceilings. Floors have been carpeted. Spaces have tall ceilings.

The foyer is screened from the circulation desk area by leaded cut glass transoms, sidelights and plain glazed doors, echoing the front doors. This room has a marble wainscot. The central circulation desk space is noteworthy (photo 6). The original semi-octagonal built-in desk, probably of oak, remains intact. Fluted wooden Scamozzi Ionic columns rise from plinths to support a wooden entablature from which springs a plaster dome (photo 7). Centered in the dome is a wood octagon frame holding cut glass. Each web of the dome is divided off by stencil borders, and centered in each web is a portrait of a famous author or figure from history (e.g., Shakespeare, Beethoven, Raphael, ect.).

The basement also has oak woodwork. A large children's room with low stage is located toward the rear of the basement. The mural in this area was painted by W. Harold Hancock, a local artist (photo 10).

The addition has three rooms on each floor. Overall, the Greensburg Carnegie Library retains much of its original character, even though it no longer serves the community as a library.

Section 8-Statement of Significance

The Greensburg Carnegie Public Library is a fine example of Neo-Classical Revival architecture. The grandest example of classical

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 4

**Greensburg Carnegie Public Library
Decatur County, Indiana**

design in the Decatur County, it was planned by a firm known for their classical architecture and for their experience in library layout; Harris and Shopbell of Evansville, Indiana. The library was the only public book repository in this county seat for nearly ninety years. Completion of the Greensburg Carnegie Library in January 1904 culminated a public effort to obtain a library for the community.

Entrepreneur and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie was born in Dunfermling, Scotland, in 1835. Having earned \$333 million in the steel industry, Carnegie was determined to benefit others with his wealth. Carnegie had had a keen interest in literature and libraries since his father helped found a library in Dunfermling during Andrew's childhood. He decided that the best use for his wealth was to fund the construction of public libraries throughout the English-speaking nations. The program started in 1886, the first recipient being his birthplace village in Scotland. Carnegie believed his libraries should be free, public institutions for communities that expressed an interest by offering a building site and public funds to maintain the property. Indiana received more Carnegie libraries than any other state, a total of 164. Many are still in use as libraries while others have been adaptively reused. Except for buildings already promised but not completed due to the cost of building materials during World War I, no Carnegie libraries were funded after 1917.

Earlier buildings funded by Carnegie tended to be imposing monuments, however, by 1908, he recognized this problem and requested that plans of proposed libraries be submitted for approval. This process was formalized in 1911 when James Bertram, Carnegie's personal assistant, issued a set of suggestions titled "Notes on Library Buildings" (sic). Carnegie believed that libraries should be plain and dignified, concepts reflected in Bertram's leaflet. "Notes" outlined basic requirements and included some suggested floor plans.

The Greensburg Carnegie Public Library reflects the earlier period of library donation by Carnegie, when few expenses were spared by

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 5

**Greensburg Carnegie Public Library
Decatur County, Indiana**

architects and the grant amount covered all construction and furnishing expenses. Greensburg had no public library at the time. The first board of trustees, consisting of three women from Greensburg and three local attorneys, organized the drive to secure a building lot and obtain a grant from Carnegie. In March of 1902, Andrew Carnegie awarded a grant of \$15,000.00 for a public library to Greensburg. On December 16, 1902, Robert and Sophronica Watson sold the building lot to the City of Greensburg. Harris and Shopbell of Evansville were selected as architects while the construction contract was awarded to Pulse and Porter, noted Greensburg contractors. The total cost of the building was \$11,916.63. The balance of the \$15,000.00 grant was applied toward furnishing and interior decoration. Construction began in 1903 and the building was complete in January of 1904. Greensburg had no free public library system prior to the establishment of the Carnegie Library. It served the community until 1993, when a new public county-wide library was erected. Aside from its public educational value to the community throughout the 1900s, the Greensburg Carnegie Public Library was a valuable tool to local educators. In the early years of the library, local teachers had students use the resources of the library to further their education. Later, schools acquired their own collections. Many community groups have used the building as a meeting site, and the library served as a repository for historical documents of the community.

The Greensburg Carnegie Public Library is also architecturally significant. The building has all the hallmarks of grand Neo-Classical Revival architecture. The turn of the century had brought prosperity to America's cities and a sense of national pride to the nation. The Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago expressed these notions to the public through the use of grand classical architecture, setting the trend for civic architecture for the next half century. The Greensburg Library is the best example of Neo-Classical Revival design in the county.

The library is also an important example from the oeuvre of Shopbell and Harris. The firm was active in Evansville from 1897

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 & 9 Page 6

**Greensburg Carnegie Public Library
Decatur County, Indiana**

until the death of W. D. Harris in 1910. A native of Princeton, Indiana, Clifford Shopbell (1871-1939) learned architecture on the job as a draftsman for the Evansville and Terre Haute Railroad. He apprenticed with several Indianapolis firms before moving to Evansville in 1894 and establishing his own firm. The partnership with Harris was followed by the establishment of Shopbell and Company, architects, which continued to design notable buildings in the Evansville area. With Harris and with Shopbell and Company, the firm designed 18 Carnegie libraries in Indiana. Only Wilson B. Parker (of South Bend and later Indianapolis) designed more Carnegie libraries with 23 commissioned. The Neo-Classical formula of a tetrastyle portico with receding wings and a central Jeffersonian dome used for the Greensburg commission is highly similar to the Shelbyville, Seymour, and Mount Vernon libraries, all dating from the first five years of the 1900s. It seems likely that Shopbell built his reputation for high-quality civic architecture on these early Carnegie commissions. After 1905, styles of his library designs vary from Tudor Revival essays to honest Craftsman examples. Several smaller libraries from this later period are Neo-Classical Revival in style.

The Greensburg Carnegie Public Library served its intended function for about ninety years. In 1993, a new public library was built to serve Decatur County. The City of Greensburg has acquired the old library and is currently contemplating rehabilitation of the building for use as a city hall. In its future function, this landmark building will continue to serve the public, hopefully for many years to come.

Section 9-Bibliography

Bobinski, George. Carnegie Libraries. Chicago: American Library Association, 1969.

Decatur County Historical Society. Decatur County History. Dallas, TX: Taylor Publishing Co., 1984.

Greensburg Standard. Untitled article about library, April 24,

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 & 10 Page 7

**Greensburg Carnegie Public Library
Decatur County, Indiana**

1903, page 4.

Greensburg Standard. Untitled article about library, August 21,
1903, page 6.

Harding, Lewis, Ed. History of Decatur County, Indiana.
Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen & Co., 1915.

Wells, Jack. Architecture of Carnegie Libraries in Indiana.
Muncie, IN: Ball State University, 1981.

Section 10-Geographical Data-Verbal Boundary Description

Lot number 132 in Block number 19, Original Plat of the Town (now
City) of Greensburg, Decatur County, Indiana.

Boundary Justification

This is the legal (and historic) boundary of the property,
including the attached later addition.