

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

For NPS use only

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

received AUG 9 1983
date entered

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

1. Name

historic WAKEFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY

and/or common WAKEFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY

2. Location

street & number ^{Mtn.} Mountain Laurel Road n/a not for publication

city, town Wakefield n/a vicinity of

state N.H. code 33 county Carroll code 003

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 type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: library

4. Owner of Property

name Wakefield Library Association

street & number Mountain Laurel Road

city, town Sanbornville vicinity of Wakefield state New Hampshire 03872

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Carroll County Complex/Registry of Deeds

street & number Route 171

city, town Ossipee state New Hampshire 03864

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Wakefield Hist. Dist. Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1979 federal state county local

depository for survey records Wakefield Historic District Commission

city, town Wakefield state New Hampshire

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	n/amoved date n/a
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Wakefield Public Library is a library building standing on its own small lot in Wakefield village. Most of the building is wooden--the two-story main block facing the street, the one and a half story wing to the rear of the main block, and the small one-story privy and rear entry addition to the rear of the wing. Directly behind the rear entry is a small brick structure, the vault, connected to the rear entry by a short enclosed wooden bridge.

The main block and the wing are both clapboarded with a cut granite block foundation. But they are otherwise treated quite differently, with the main block receiving the more elaborate ornament. The main block has a truncated hip roof with a lower gable roof over the shallow pedimented entry pavilion in the center of the east (street) facade. Elaborate monumental pilasters ornament the corners of the main block and the entry pavilion. The pilasters are fluted with richly carved capitols of the Composite order (but without the acanthus). And the granite block foundation projects beneath their richly moulded bases. A wide sillboard with watertable encircles the main block. The first story windows all have one over one sash, louvred shutters and moulded trim topped by a small cornice. The short, double two-pane casement windows of the second story have paneled side trim and louvred shutters. These windows rest directly on a moulded board, which continues around the main block, interrupted only by the pilasters; and they are topped by the frieze of the main block's cornice. The heavy box cornice has modillions, dentils, mouldings, and a deep pulvinated frieze with mouldings. The cornice is pedimented over the entry pavilion, with flush boarding filling the small tympanum. A single wide and tall brick chimney breaks the floor's north slope. The main street facade is three bays wide. The two wide granite steps lead up to the entry in the central pavilion--double doors, each with a single moulded panel with enlarged corners. The doors are surrounded by a moulded trim and topped by an entablature, which is supported by carved consoles, and features richly carved modillions. (Beside the door are modern "colonial" style electric lights.) A single window is found on the second story of the entry pavilion, and in each story of the two side bays of the main facade. The north and south facades have two windows in each story. On each side of the narrower rear wing, on the rear (west) facade is found a single window in each story.

The wing's roof is unusual. A gable roof covering most of the wing intersects with the truncated hip roof of the main block. But the west slope of the main block's hip roof is also continued down to the eaves of the gable roof. The north and south side facades of the wing are therefore asymmetrical, being one story high in the rear half, but rising to two stories towards the front. (This unusual arrangement allows the headroom for a staircase in the wing to the second story of the main block.) The wing has much less ornament--cornerboards and a plainer box cornice with mouldings, frieze, and returns on the west gable. The only ornament from the main block that is repeated on the wing is the moulded board beneath the second story windows, which is continued across the higher sections of the north and south facades. The sash windows of the wing have moulded trim and louvred shutters. On the north facade are three six over six sash windows and a low wooden bulkhead door to the basement. The south facade has four windows, two six over six sash windows and two narrower four over four sash windows. The west gable end has a single four over four sash window in the gable and a single six over six sash window on the first story to the north of the rear entry addition.

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The small one-story rear entry-privy addition has a brick foundation; clapboarded walls with cornerboards; a cornice with a sloping soffit, mouldings and frieze; and a shed roof. Moulded trim surrounds the paneled door with window in the north facade, the small four-pane window in the south facade, and the privy cleanout door in the west wall of the foundation. Most of the addition's west facade is covered by the short wooden bridge to the brick vault. The bridge, suspended two and a half feet above the ground, has blank walls of vertical beaded boarding ornamented only by a shallow moulding at the top. The vault in the rear has a barely visible concrete foundation; brick walls laid in common bond, flemish variation, and broken only by a small three pane window in the north facade; a plain box cornice; and an almost flat roof.

The front doors in the main block open into a small vestibule, not much wider than the doors themselves. The vestibule has a floor of narrow maple boards, side walls of paneled wainscoating topped by a moulded rail with plaster above, a moulded cornice and a ceiling of narrow boards. The west wall of the vestibule is mostly occupied by the entry into the library proper--a single wide door with four panels beneath an ornate leaded window. The door is flanked by paneled side trim and ornate leaded half sidelights above moulded panels. Save for the small vestibule, the main block contains one large two-story room surrounded on all sides by a balcony. The balcony shelters the vestibule in the east wall, the fireplace in the north wall, and the librarian's desk on the west, as well as alcoves created by bookcases which extend from the wall to the outer edge of the balcony. (The bookcases are paneled on their outer faces.) The main level and balcony have floors of narrow maple boards. The lower level walls are plaster beneath a shallow moulded cornice and above wainscoating with a moulded baseboard. The apron and the stool of the first story windows are continued around the room as a moulded rail topping the wainscoating. The ceilings beneath the balcony are, like the vestibule's, made of narrow boards. The vestibule in the center of the east wall is flanked on each side by a corner alcove which contains a built-in bench. The fireplace in the center of the north wall is also flanked on each side by an alcove. The large brick fireplace has a narrow hearth and a mantelpiece enriched by mouldings and a fret beneath the shelf and by three paneled sections above the shelf. The projecting central section has a built-in clock with a brass clock face surrounded by egg and dart moulding. In the panels of the recessed side sections are brass plaques inscribed respectively "Wakefield Library/Organized 1894/Enlarged 1902", and a "A Memorial/Of/Ellen Almira Dow". Flanking the moulded panels of these side sections are miniature freestanding Composite columns. In the center of the west wall, between corner alcoves with built-in benches, is the paneled librarian's desk, which occupies most of the opening into the wing. Two alcoves are found on the south side of the room between the corner alcoves. The balcony is surrounded by a railing with a moulded handrail, turned posts at the corners, and plain balusters. The walls at the balcony level are lined with bookcases, interrupted only occasionally, usually by the windows. The windows have moulded trim, a plaster wall above them and wainscoating below. Small benches are built in beneath some of the windows. On the east wall, there are three such windowed sections, the central one having a bench. The north and south walls each have two windowed sections with benches. The bookcases on the north wall are also interrupted by the plastered chimney breast. On the west wall are found two windowed sections, an opening with paneled trim at the top of the stairs from the wing, and the small paneled door to the attic of the wing. (This attic, with its slanted plaster walls and single window, is used for storage.) The coffered ceiling of the main room has plaster panels with moulded wooden frames. Directly above the balcony

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are found three rectangular coffers on each side, which together frame a rectangular coffer corresponding to the large open space in the center of the room. Inscribed within this large rectangular frame is a circular frame which encircles the most unexpected feature of the interior--a plastered shallow saucer dome, nineteen feet in diameter.

The first story of the wing includes two rooms, a large room that opens into the main room of the library, and a smaller storage room to the rear. Both have narrow maple flooring, moulded baseboards, plaster walls, simple moulded cornices, and plain pilaster ceilings. Their windows and doors have moulded trim with cornerblocks. The larger room, lit by four windows on the south and two on the north, is mostly filled with bookcases. On its north wall is the stairway (with turned newelpost, plain balusters and moulded handrail) to the balcony level of the main room. Beneath the stairway is the paneled door to the basement. (The basement, with its concrete floor and stone walls, is used for storage and the furnace.) A paneled door with a window leads from the larger room to the smaller storage room, which is lit by two windows. A paneled door opens from the small room into the rear entry-privy addition. The small addition has hardwood floors, walls and ceilings of beaded boarding, and simple trim around its openings. The north half of the addition is a passageway with the building's rear door. The south half houses the library's one-hole privy, behind a door of vertical beaded boarding. (The building still does not have running water.) The passageway continues onto the short bridge which also has a hardwood floor and beaded board walls and ceiling. A paneled door opens from the bridge into the vault with its brick walls, single window, concrete floor and ceiling.

The small library lot is open on the east street front, but is enclosed on the north, west and most of the south sides by a picket fence with square posts topped by urns. The grounds are grassed with a few foundation shrubs on the street front of the building and a few trees on the north boundary. A paved walkway leads to the front steps from the curbed sidewalk on the street, and a small wooden sign near the walkway identifies the building.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1894-5, 1902-3

Builder/Architect Ernest Greene, Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Wakefield Public Library is significant both for its association with Seth Low (1850-1916), an important figure in American government and education during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and for its architecture, as a fine example of the Colonial Revival style.

Education and Government: Seth Low was the youngest child of China trade merchant Abiel Abbott Low (1811-1893) and his first wife, Ellen Almira (Dow) Low (1823-1850). His mother, who was born in Wakefield, died a week after his birth, so the young boy was raised in Brooklyn, New York, by a stepmother. The family, however, maintained close ties with the Dows of Wakefield. Seth Low first visited Wakefield at the age of two and continued to visit his relatives there throughout his life, both as a child and as an adult. He attended Columbia College, graduating in 1870. After college, he entered his father's firm. But he was soon attracted to public affairs and politics. In 1881, Low was elected mayor of Brooklyn on the Republican ticket. His two terms (January, 1882-December, 1885) were marked by reform in the Brooklyn school system, a reduction of the city debt and the replacement of patronage by the civil service system in the city government.

Low became a trustee of Columbia College in 1881. And, after his early retirement from business, he was asked in 1889 to become president of Columbia College. As president of Columbia from 1890 to 1901, he presided over the transformation of the institution into a modern university. Existing schools, such as the Teachers College, Barnard College for women, the medical school and three divinity schools, became part of the university. The scope of graduate education was greatly enlarged, and a university press was established. The rapidly expanding institution was outgrowing its midtown Manhattan campus. So, under Low's leadership, the present site on Morningside Heights was purchased. There a new campus was built to which the university moved in 1897. In 1895, Low contributed a million dollars to construct the central building of the new campus. Low Memorial Library, built as a memorial to his father, was designed by Charles Follen McKim, and is regarded as one of the major buildings of the period.

Low ran unsuccessfully as an independent candidate in the first mayoral campaign for the enlarged city of New York in 1897. But, in 1901, he won the election for that post and resigned as president of Columbia. His two year term was again a reform regime, notable for the development of the civil service, but he failed to win reelection. During his last years, Low continued in public service, serving as chairman of the board of Tuskegee Institute, president of the National Civic Federation and the New York Chamber of Commerce, an arbitrator in labor disputes and a delegate to international and state conventions. Since his death in 1916, Seth Low has been remembered for his contributions to both municipal reform and higher education in America.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet #5.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .14

Quadrangle name Wolfeboro, NH

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

A

1	9	3	3	6	0	6	0	4	8	2	5	8	0	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: The nominated property includes the Wakefield Public Library and the small lot on which it stands. The rectangular lot, approximately sixty feet wide and one hundred feet deep, fronts on Mountain Laurel Road in Wakefield village, (Wakefield Tax Map 32, Parcel 11) and is that which Seth Low purchased for the use of the library in 1894.

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 David L. Ruell

organization Lakes Region Planning Commission date March 20, 1983

street & number Main Street telephone (603) 279-8171

city or town Meredith state New Hampshire 03253

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.

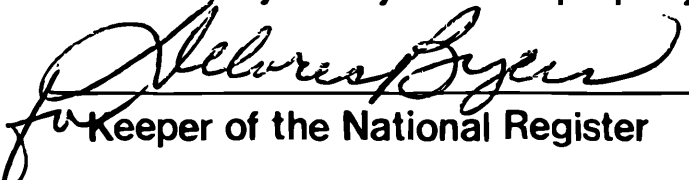
State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

Commissioner, Dept. of Resources & Economic Development

title NH State Historic Preservation Officer date JUL 29 1983

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

 Clarence B. Byers Keiper of the National Register 9/8/83

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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Seth Low's association with Wakefield was marked not simply by visits to his relatives, but also by a personal interest in local affairs. As the town of Wakefield lacked a public library, Seth Low and others established the Wakefield Public Library in 1879. In its first years, the library was a casual institution, operating with a volunteer librarian, and without a proper building of its own. It was largely dependent on Low's contributions for the purchase of books. That changed when the Wakefield Library Association was organized in 1894. A formal charter from the state legislature, in March of 1895, established the Association as a corporation with the power to hold real estate and to maintain a public library in Wakefield village. The charter named Seth Low as one of the Association's five founding members. In June, 1895, Low deeded to the Association a small building just north of the old Wakefield Town Hall which he had purchased the previous October. This one and a half story gable roofed wooden building, erected as a lawyer's office, probably in the early 1860's¹, served as the Wakefield Public Library's modest home for the next seven years.

But, Seth Low, having given a new library in memory of his father to his university, now decided to give a new library in memory of his mother to her native town. In the fall of 1902, the local paper noting that "The Wakefield Public Library ... has really outgrown its present quarters ...", announced that "Seth Low, who has always been its most liberal patron, will soon provide a new building for its use. The plans have been prepared and sent on and Mr. Low has notified the trustees that the money is ready at any time that they choose to begin operations."² The trustees were not slow about accepting the gift and construction soon began. The new building incorporated the older building, which was remodeled inside and out to become the present rear wing. The following spring, the newspaper noted that "the work has been somewhat retarded owing to delay in securing workmen for certain parts of the work."³ But, by the end of July, the building was "fast nearing completion".⁴ And, on August 22, 1903, the Wakefield Public Library was dedicated in a ceremony at which Seth Low spoke about the mother he had never known, and formally presented the new building to the trustees of the Library Association. (Seth Low's interest did not, however, end with the construction of the building, for he served as a member of the board of trustees until his death.)

The new library building was designed by New York architect, Ernest Greene (1864-1936). It was built by Alonzo Remick who did "all the carpenter work and had charge of all the details" under the "general supervision" of Abbott Dow, Seth Low's cousin.⁵ It has survived virtually intact since 1903. Early photographs show that, but for the addition of electric lights, both the exteriors and the interiors of the main block and the wing have not been changed. The brick vault, with its short wooden bridge, was added in 1923 to provide secure fireproof storage. But that is, by all accounts, the only significant change the Library has seen since Mr. Low's donation of the new building.

¹The empty lot was purchased by Attorney Charles Chesley in September, 1861 and sold by him "with building thereon" in September 1873. Chesley probably had his office built soon after his purchase of the land.

²Carroll County Pioneer (Sanbornville) Sept. 12, 1902.

³Carroll County Pioneer, May 1, 1903.

⁴Carroll County Pioneer, July 31, 1903.

⁵Carroll County Pioneer, August 28, 1903.

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Architecture: The small village of Wakefield is one of the most charming and well preserved early villages in central New Hampshire. The setting of the Wakefield Public Library amid these attractive wooden buildings, dating from the 1760's to the 1830's, was a major factor in its design. The local paper reported, "After considering whether to build of stone, brick or wood, it seemed most appropriate and in keeping with the town and its immediate surroundings to build of wood".⁶ The same sensitivity to the surrounding buildings undoubtedly determined the choice of the Colonial Revival style for the library. The Colonial Revival would later become the most popular style for libraries in New Hampshire, and would be used for such important buildings as Guy Lowell's Boscawen Public Library (1915), and Jens Frederick Larson's Baker Library at Dartmouth (1926-28). But, in 1902, its use for a library building was still uncommon. Although at least one significant library, Weeks Public Library in Greenland (1897-8), had been built in the Colonial Revival style, the preferred styles of the time were the more purely Classical styles, as used in Thomas Silloway's Conway Public Library (1900-1), Ernest Flagg's Sheldon Library at St. Paul's School, Concord (1900-1), and Charles Brigham's Nichols Memorial Library in Centre Harbor (1909-10). The Medieval styles, although beginning to lose favor, were yet inspiring important library buildings such as Brigham's Romanesque Revival Gale Memorial Library in Laconia (1901-3), and Ralph Adams Cram's Gothic Revival Hunt Memorial Library in Nashua (1902-3). The predominance of the Colonial Revival in library design would not be truly established in the state until after the First World War.

If the Wakefield Public Library is one of the earliest of New Hampshire's nearly fifty Colonial Revival libraries, it is also one of the best, ranking among the finest half dozen of the group. The exterior is well proportioned, with fine lines and attractive ornament. The monumental pilasters, the box cornice with pulvinated frieze, and pedimented entry pavilion, and the truncated hip roof give the main block a pleasing dignity that belies its small size. The main room of the interior, with its judicious ornament, fine fireplace, and unusual saucer dome is equally impressive. The Wakefield Public Library is a small gem of a building, significant not for its size, but for its surprising quality. It should be recognized as one of New Hampshire's most important library buildings.

⁶Ibid.

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Continuation sheet #5 - REFERENCES

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"An Act to Incorporate the Wakefield Library Associations", LAWS OF THE STATE OF
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Vol. XI, pp. 449-50.

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Interviews - Mrs. Lillian R. Brown, Librarian, Wakefield Public Library, March 3 & 16, 1983.

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