

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

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

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

1. Name

historic Henry M. Simmons Memorial Church

and/or common Boys and Girls Library (preferred)

2. Location

street & number 5810 8th Avenue _____ not for publication

city, town Kenosha _____ vicinity of _____ congressional district 1st

state Wisconsin code 55 county Kenosha code 059

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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<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
		<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 Kenosha

street & number 625 52nd Street

city, town Kenosha _____ vicinity of _____ state Wisconsin 53140

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Kenosha County Courthouse

street & number 912 56th Street

city, town Kenosha _____ state Wisconsin 53140

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? _____ yes no

date 1980 _____ federal state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin

city, town Madison _____ state Wisconsin 53706

7. Description

Condition

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

Check one

unaltered

altered

Check one

original site

moved

date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Oriented east-west on Eighth Avenue in Kenosha, several blocks from the central business district, the Boys and Girls Library is a handsome and dignified element in a disordered neighborhood. The immediate area includes parking lots, multi-unit residential, civic, and some commercial buildings. The library site itself is planted with grass, shrubbery, and vines which veil parts of the building.

The former Henry M. Simmons Memorial Church is a small, coursed limestone Neo-Gothic church, with a gable-roofed nave flanked on the northeast corner by a crenelated square tower. The double-door entrance is set into a pointed arch with stone label molding in the center of the tower, atop a short flight of stairs. A cusped perpendicular window with leaded glass fills the front elevation. Stone-trimmed limestone buttresses reinforce the corners and south wall of the building; the buttress between the front gable and tower rises full-height to become a polygonal bartizan. Paired open arches in the bell-tower are half-filled with louvres and are cusped in the arch. A small, gabled-roof chapel (once housing the organ) projects from the north side; an open, cloister-like adjunct to the office on the south side (with exterior access) balances the plan. A stone water table coursing the whole marks the juncture of the walls with the coursed limestone foundation beneath.

The interior, which serves admirably as a library, is covered by a heavy oak-trussed ceiling. Pointed-arch windows with stone mullions and cusps punctuating the north and south walls are filled with cathedral glass, admitting more light than the original amber glass. Triple-light, full-length perpendicular windows fill the east and west walls. The original tile floor is intact beneath the linoleum surface. The raised choir at the east end, framed by a large stone arch with a carved corbel-head, contains a reading area. The side chapel opening to the north, with its perpendicular screen, serves as a fiction room. A door on the south wall of the choir with open-cusped "overlight" leads to the small cloister outside. The oak panelling which lined the walls of the choir was removed to accommodate library shelving, as were the church pews and furniture. Hanging lanterns in the nave were replaced with fluorescent lighting, but several of the wall sconces remain in place.

The basement is divided into a work area in the west end and storage and service areas in the east, with a "story hour room" between.

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/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
Specific dates 1907 ¹	Builder/Architect N. Max Dunning ²		Association w/significar person	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

In addition to its distinction as an able piece of design by an important Midwestern architect of the early twentieth century, the Henry M. Simmons Memorial Church is a physical remnant of the pastorate of the city's first woman minister and a notable figure in the Unitarian Church. In its present use as a special library facility for the children of Kenosha, the building represents an unusual educational concept.

Architecture

Born in Kenosha, N. Max Dunning (1873–1945) was to play a significant part in the practice of architecture and in the profession. Dunning studied at the University of Wisconsin before entering the Chicago office of J. C. Llewelyn. Developing a speciality in school and industrial design, he later opened his own office in Chicago from which he practiced until 1933. During World War II, Dunning was appointed to the U. S. Housing Commission and served on the Emergency Commission on Unemployment. During the Roosevelt administration, Dunning served with the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, as Assistant Director of Housing of the Public Works Administration, as Assistant in the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department, as Assistant Commissioner of Buildings of the P. W. A., and as Assistant Advisor to the Public Buildings Administration. Dunning³ was elected to the Chicago Chapter of the A. I. A. in 1915, rising to Fellow in 1919. After serving three years on the National Board of Directors, Dunning was elected Vice-President of the Institute in 1924. He was instrumental in the founding of the Architectural League of America and was elected its first president. In addition to the Simmons Memorial Church, Dunning designed the City Hospital in Kenosha, a four-story red brick monolith with Neo Classical-Arts and Crafts decoration. Dunning's better-known Chicago works include the American Book Company Building (1912), Fourteenth Church of Christ Scientist (1923), and the Furniture Mart. Small in size, the Simmons Memorial Church represents the classic form of the English Neo-Gothic country church, with its Medieval elements (tower, crenelations, stone arches and carvings, trussed ceiling, and windows) executed with restrained richness. The economical interior design (with vestibule leading directly to the nave, choir, and ancillary spaces) rendered in the picturesque forms of tower, side chapels, and cloister, reveal a familiarity with Gothic vocabulary and a clear concept of the program. The quality of the stonemasonry and construction, and of the few carved elements inside, show an appreciation of the textural potential of the materials.

¹Kenosha Evening News, July 16, 1907, and cornerstone date on building.

²Copy of church Dedication Program in Kenosha County Historical Society. See also New York Times, April 20, 1945.

³Henry F. Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased) Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., Los Angeles, 1970.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Kenosha Evening News, 1907, 1929, 1931, 1937, 1938, 1957.
Who's Who in America, Vol. 13, A. N. Marquis Co., Chicago, 1952.
Withey, Henry F., Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased),
Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., Los Angeles, 1970.

10. Geographical Data

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreege of nominated property less than 1.0

Quadrangle name Kenosha, Wis.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	6	4	3	2	6	6	0	4	7	1	4	5	7	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

East 9 rods of Lot 2, Block 49, being part of the SE 1/4 of Section 31, Town 2N, Range 23E, in the City of Kenosha, Kenosha County, Wisconsin.

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

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carla E. Johnson

organization _____ date March, 1980

street & number 4102 Fifth Avenue telephone (414) 654-2851

city or town Kenosha state Wisconsin 53140

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Richard Henry

title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

date 8/8/80

For HCERS use only

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

W. Ray Luce
Keeper of the National Register

date 10/24/80

Attest:

Linda Hunt McClelland
Chief of Registration

date 10.23.80

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Association with significant person.

The Henry M. Simmons Memorial Church was constructed in 1907 during the pastorate of Florence Buck (1860-1925), one of the first and most notable women ordained in the Unitarian faith. Florence Buck studied for the ministry in England and America, receiving her ordination at Meadville Theological School in 1894. After a brief pastorate in Cleveland (which she shared with another early woman minister, Marian Murdock), she began her years in Kenosha, preaching there for 10 years between 1901 and 1910.⁴ She was the first woman to have a ministry in Kenosha, and proved to be very capable to the task, introducing several innovations including the new church building.⁵ After leaving Kenosha, she handled various administrative duties until 1912, when she became the associate secretary of the Department of Religious Education for the American Unitarian Association. She remained at her duties in Boston for the rest of her life, supervising the publication of various religious materials for the Unitarian church and the educational branch of the ministry.⁶ At her death in 1925, Florence Buck was acting director of the department and highly praised for her contributions to religious matters.⁷

Education.

In 1929, the Simmons Memorial Church was purchased by the city of Kenosha and converted into a special kind of library: one devoted solely to children. Since its inception, the Boys and Girls Library has served as a combination education center and child-sitter for the city's pre-adolescent population. In addition to the usual collections of books, records and filmstrips, the library staff has offered through the years special films, story hours, puppet shows and craft projects designed to stimulate the imagination of a child. Programs for parents have also been a standard part of the library's operations, as have city sponsored summer reading classes, children's community plays and other forms of entertainment.⁸ Since the city made few alterations in the interior of the church building, the activities of the Boys and Girls Library have been conducted in an almost fantasy-like setting that still evokes special memories in those for whom the library was a major part of childhood in Kenosha. The city's recent plan to move the Boys and Girls Library into a newer building has created concern among these people for the future of the old building. Although discussions are being conducted about new uses for the former church, its future existence is in doubt at this time.

⁴Biographical information on the life and career of Florence Buck was obtained from the Unitarian Universalist Association, and copies of this information is on file with this office.

⁵Personal papers of Florence Buck, dealing with her pastorate at Kenosha and the construction of the Simmons Memorial Church are on deposit at the Kenosha County Historical Society. See also Christian Review, Nov. 5, 1925.

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8. ⁶Information from Unitarian Universalist Association.
- ⁷Who's Who in America, Vol. 13 (1924-1925). In 1920, Florence Buck received an honorary Doctorate of Divinity from Meadville Theological School, the first woman to be so honored by the school.
- ⁸Activities of the Children's Library are recorded in scrapbooks at the library, including program brochures, photographs and newspaper clippings. See also Kenosha Evening News, April 11, 1929; June 2, Dec. 21, 1931; Oct. 5, 1932; Dec. 2, 1938; Sept. 9, 1957, and Christian Science Monitor, July 25, 1942.
- ⁹Kenosha Journal Times, June 14, 1980.
11. Terry L. Shoptaugh, Historian, Historic Preservation Division
State Historical Society of Wisconsin June, 1980
816 State Street 608/262-3390
Madison Wisconsin 53706
- Diane H. Filipowicz, Architectural Historian, Historic Preservation Division
State Historical Society of Wisconsin June, 1980
816 State Street 608/262-2970
Madison Wisconsin 53706