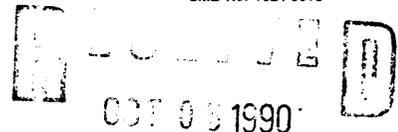


1736

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Nonnie Roark Rhymes Memorial Library  
other names/site number Richland Parish Library

2. Location

street & number 206 South Louisa Street N/A  not for publication  
city, town Rayville N/A  vicinity  
state Louisiana code LA county Richland code 083 zip code 71269

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.  
Leslie P. Tassin October 1, 1990  
Signature of certifying official Leslie P. Tassin, LA State Historic Preservation Officer, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism Date  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register. Entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet. 11/2/90  
 determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_  
fu Signature of the Keeper  
Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/library  

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Work in progress  

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)no style  

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concretewalls brick  

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roof tarother \_\_\_\_\_  

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**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

The Nonnie Roark Rhymes Memorial Library is a small boxy one story brick building constructed in 1928. It is located on the edge of downtown Rayville on the grounds of the old high school. The building remains eligible for the Register despite additions made in 1948 and '53.

The facade of the original section of the building features 12 over 12 windows with semicircular fanlights. The fanlights are outlined in bricks and accented with keystones. The cast concrete door surround (with the word "memorial" cut into the top) is capped by a decorative device bearing the name of the woman for whom the library was named and her date of death, 1927. Richland Parish Library is inscribed in a linear concrete panel above the door. The one room interior of the building is very plain, with the previously described windows being the only decorative feature. The walls are plastered.

The following alterations have been made since construction:

(1) In 1948 two additions were made--one across the rear elevation and one room on the north side. When the rear addition was made, the back wall of the original building was demolished to make one larger room. The side wing is set back about a foot or so from the facade of the original building.

(2) In 1953 a one room addition was made to the rear wing on the south side.

The 1948 additions were done in almost identical brick to the original building. The 1953 addition at the south rear corner is in a lighter color red brick.

**Assessment of Integrity:**

Although the various additions have more than doubled the size of the original library and are definitely noticeable, the original building still stands forth as a distinct unit, chiefly because the wings are mainly to the rear, are very plain in comparison, and blend in because of a similar brick color. Most importantly, a patron of the library during the historic period would definitely recognize the building, additions notwithstanding.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)  
Education

Period of Significance  
1928-1940

Significant Dates  
1928-1940

Cultural Affiliation  
N/A

Significant Person  
N/A

Architect/Builder  
not known

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Nonnie Roark Rhymes Library is of state importance in the area of education because it was in the forefront of the development of Louisiana's parish library system from its construction in 1928 to 1940. 1940 is being used as the ending date for the period of significance because the Richland Parish Library continued in this role past the required 50 year cutoff for significance.

The development of the parish library system, the basic unit in Louisiana's public library service, is a comparatively recent phenomenon. The Louisiana Library Commission, founded in 1920, had as a principal goal the establishment of a parish library system as the best means of reaching Louisianians, most of whom did not live in large towns or cities. The necessary impetus to get the project off the ground came from a Carnegie grant of \$50,000 awarded to the League of Library Commissions in New York, which channeled the funds to Louisiana in 1925. The purpose of the Carnegie grant was to demonstrate library service on a statewide basis. Several states applied to the League of Library Commissions for the one grant. Louisiana was chosen for various reasons, not the least of which was the extreme need. As surprising as it may seem, there were only a handful of towns and cities in the state with public libraries. Almost all of the few that did exist were in the state's larger cities, leaving the majority of the population without public library services.

The \$50,000 Carnegie grant enabled the Louisiana Library Commission to interest parish seats in becoming pilot projects. The word was spread through promotional pieces and presentations in communities throughout the state. Under the terms of the Louisiana Library Demonstration (as it was called), the Louisiana Library Commission provided books on indefinite loan and technical advice to any parish seat that met certain stipulations (support from entire parish, support from parish governing body, employment of acceptable full-time librarian, etc.).

Richland Parish was chosen as the first demonstration project, largely through the efforts of the Lambda Kappa Club, a local women's organization. The project began in April 1926, and Richland is cited by authorities as having the

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

History of Nonnie Roark Rhymes Library submitted by the Original Richland Library Restoration Society, Inc., Innes E. Green, researcher and author. This excellent sketch is based on research in the Richland Beacon-News, Richland Parish Library records, the below referenced 1931 report on the demonstration project, and oral history.

Louisiana Library Commission. Report on the Louisiana Library Demonstration, 1925-1930. New York, League of Library Commissions, 1931.

Louisiana Library Commission Biennial Reports, 1925-1941.

Louisiana Library Commission. "Louisiana Parish Libraries." Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1946.

Stephenson, Shirley Knowles. "History of the Louisiana State Library, Formerly Louisiana Library Commission." Doctoral dissertation, Louisiana State Library, 1957.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

State historic preservation office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acres of property less than one acre

UTM References

A 15 616800 3593600  
Zone Easting Northing

B \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_

D \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Please refer to enclosed sketch map.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Boundary lines were drawn to encompass the significant resource. The library building is located on the grounds of a non-related high school with all its ancillary buildings. To have followed property lines would have meant including all these numerous non-contributing buildings. Instead, the boundary lines were drawn to discretely encompass the candidate building.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title National Register Staff  
organization Division of Historic Preservation date July 1990  
street & number P. O. Box 44247 telephone 504/342-8160  
city or town Baton Rouge state LA zip code 70804

Owner: Richland Parish School Board

P. O. Box 599  
Rayville, LA 71269

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Nonnie Roark Rhymes Memorial Library, Rayville, Richland Parish, LA

Section number 8 Page 1

first parish library in the state. (New Orleans is also technically a parish, but authorities at the time regarded its library as a city library and continually referred to Richland as establishing the first parish library.) The library was headquartered originally in a wooden school building which had been offered rent-free by the school board. (This building does not survive.) Branch libraries were set up in country stores and houses across the parish. By October 1926 there were ten distribution points, as reported in the local paper, the Richland Beacon-News.

Supporters soon saw their infant library outgrowing its quarters in the old school building. In December, 1927, the Richland Beacon-News reported "New Public Library Assured." Mr. R. R. Rhymes, a prominent planter, had pledged funds to construct a permanent home for the library in memory of his wife, Nonnie Roark Rhymes, who had served on the library board until her death in January 1927. The Beacon-News reported ground breaking ceremonies for the new building in January 1928 and dedication ceremonies on May 4 of that year. A 1929 report noted that the library had some 4,500 books and a circulation of approximately 50,000. In a 1931 report issued on the demonstration project, the Louisiana Library Commission praised the pioneering Richland Parish Library, stating that "the enthusiasm of the people of the first parish to establish a library has done a great deal to spread interest in the northern part of the state." The library struggled through the Depression, and in 1941 an important goal was achieved when an overwhelming majority of citizens voted in favor of a property tax to support the system. (In prior years, the library budget had depended upon varying grants from the parish governing body, and to a lesser extent, the school board.)

Richland was one of three parishes to establish a parish library system during the 1925-29 demonstration project. The other two were Concordia in 1928 and Webster in 1929. The project continued long after the initial phase, concluding in 1969, when all but one parish (St. Landry) had established a publicly supported parish library system. Biennial reports of the Louisiana Library Commission reveal that only fifteen of Louisiana's sixty-four parishes had parish libraries in place by 1938-39. The distribution of these parishes is shown on the attached map that accompanied the report. As noted, the only other public libraries were a few town or city libraries. By 1940-41, two parishes had been added, which meant, taking town and city libraries into account, that forty-four parishes had no public libraries whatsoever within their borders. A 1946 promotional tract prepared by the Library Commission to encourage the parish library movement noted that less than one-third of the state's parishes gave their citizens parishwide library service in 1945. Bringing libraries to rural Louisiana was identified as a major problem, with only one person in five in small communities or on farms having access to public libraries.

The foregoing statistics have been cited in order to place the Richland Parish Library in its proper historical context, the development of Louisiana's parish library system. Richland was a pioneer from the beginning and continued

CONTINUED

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

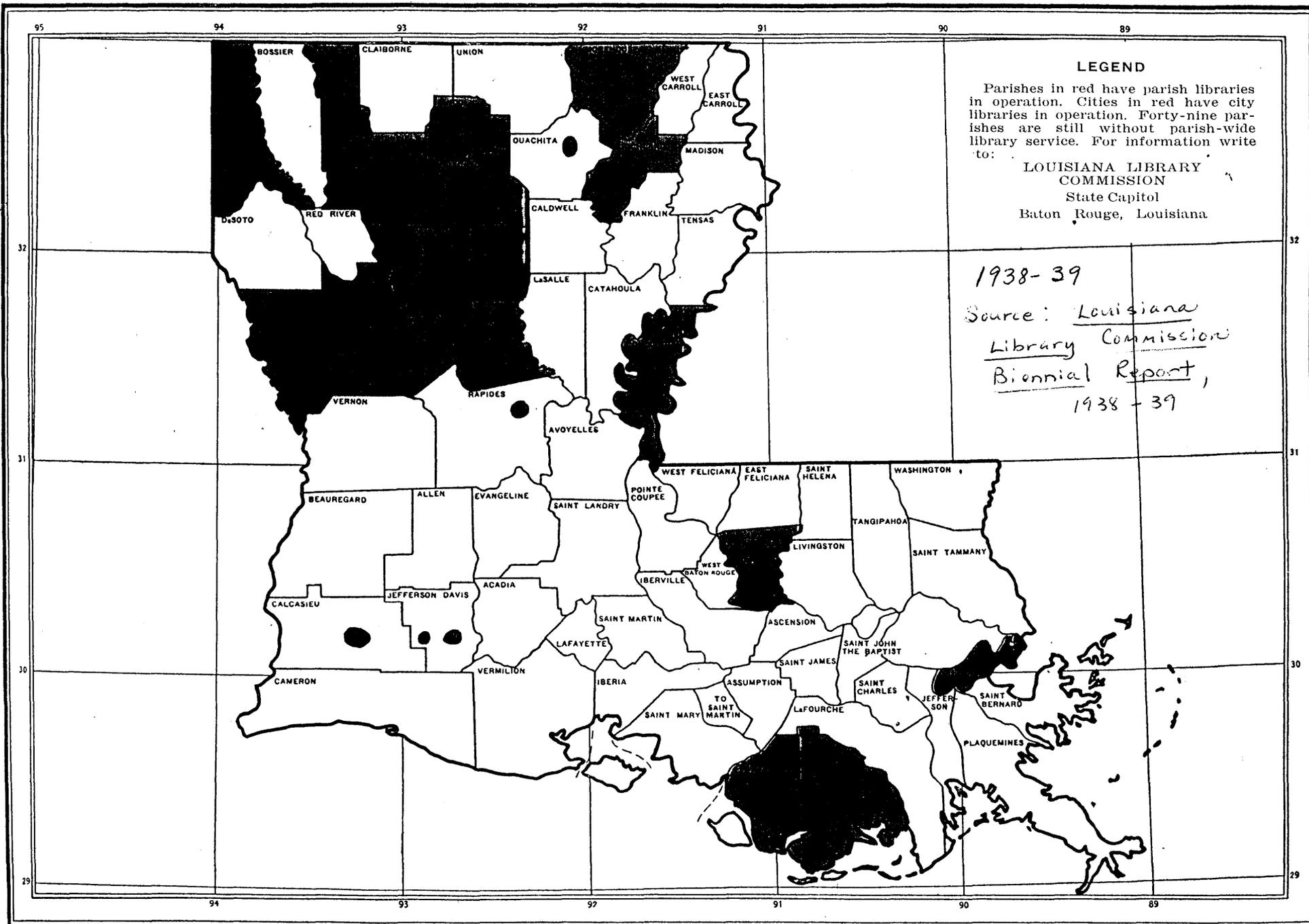
Nonnie Roark Rhymes Memorial Library, Rayville, Richland Parish, LA

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to have one of relatively few parish libraries in the state up to and past 1940, the 50 year cutoff for significance.

The 1928 building under consideration continued as parish library headquarters until 1971, when a new and larger facility was opened. Until 1988, the old library was used for classes by the adjacent high school. In 1989 a local women's club, the Society of the Arts and Crafts, launched a campaign to raise funds to restore the building and organized a support group, the Original Richland Library Restoration Society, Inc. Sufficient funds were received through local donations to undertake the restoration project, which is currently in progress. The building will be used as a combination local history museum and community center.



LEGEND

Parishes in red have parish libraries in operation. Cities in red have city libraries in operation. Forty-nine parishes are still without parish-wide library service. For information write to:

LOUISIANA LIBRARY COMMISSION  
State Capitol  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

1938-39  
Source: Louisiana  
Library Commission  
Biennial Report,  
1938-39

Nonnie Roark Rhymes Memorial Library  
Rayville  
Richland Parish, LA

