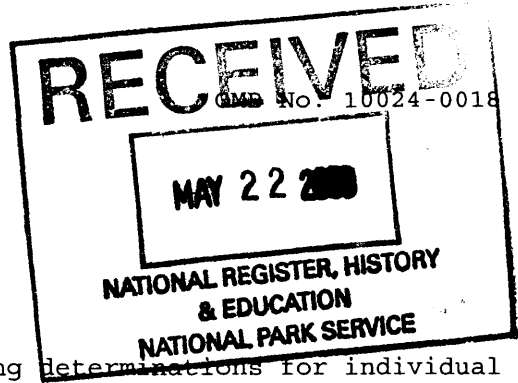


NPS Form 10-900  
(January 1992)

United States Department of Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

733



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to 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 Library Park  
other names/site number City Park, Central Park, The Commons

**2. Location**

street & number 711 59th Place N/A not for publication  
city or town Kenosha N/A vicinity  
state Wisconsin code WI county Kenosha code 059 zip code 53140

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets    does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant    nationally    statewide x locally. (   See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Alicia L. Corbin  
Signature of certifying official/Title  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer-WI

May 12, 2000  
Date

State or 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 of Federal agency and bureau

Library Park  
Name of Property

Kenosha County, WI  
County and State

**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.  
    — See continuation sheet.
  - removed from the National Register.
  - other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper: *Edson A. Beall* Date of Action: 6/22/00

**5. Classification**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Ownership of Property (check as many boxes as apply) | Category of Property (Check only one box) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> private                     | <input type="checkbox"/> building(s)      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local     | <input type="checkbox"/> district         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-state                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-federal              | <input type="checkbox"/> structure        |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> object           |

| Number of Resources within Property (Do not include listed resources within the count) |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| Contributing   | Noncontributing |
| _____  | _____           |
| _____  | _____           |
| _____  | _____           |
| _____  | _____           |
| 0  | 0               |
| Total  |                 |

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register  
4

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)  
Landscape/Park

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)  
Landscape/Park

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)  
N/A

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

|            |            |
|------------|------------|
| foundation | <u>N/A</u> |
| walls      | <u>N/A</u> |
| roof       | <u>N/A</u> |
| other      | <u>N/A</u> |

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

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 1 Library Park  
Kenosha, Kenosha County, Wisconsin

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**GENERAL DESCRIPTION AND PRESENT APPEARANCE**

Library Park is located in downtown Kenosha, a few blocks west of Lake Michigan. Bounded by 7th Avenue on the east, 8th Avenue on the west, 59th Place on the north, and 61st Street on the south, the park comprises 5.5 acres of land approximately twice as long as wide, the east and west being the longer sides. Set aside as public open space when Kenosha was settled in 1835, nationally-known landscape architect O.C. Simonds platted the design of Library Park as it stands today in 1899, in an informal, romantic style. (1) The only building in the park is the Gilbert M. Simmons Memorial Library, situated in the middle of the site (one of two contributing features, and previously listed in the NRHP). There are two statues: the Soldiers' Monument (the second contributing feature), which stands centered between the east-west boundaries and approximately thirty feet from the park's northern edge; and the Lincoln Statue (non-contributing) at the northeast corner of the park. Slowly curving walks cross the wide expanses of lawn, intersecting in front of the building on the north. Trees planted in small groups or individually are scattered across the park, creating dappled shade and an open, uncluttered scene.

*Organization and Design of Park*

Comparing O.C. Simonds' original 1899 plan for the park (see Map 1) with a recent Kenosha Parks Department sketch map (see Map 2), it is evident that the original sidewalk circulation system is intact. Two short walks were added at the north side of the park (Walk 4 extension and Walk 8 on Map 2) and another short walk added at the main entrance by dividing Walk 3 to create a space for the Lincoln statue. A sidewalk now runs along the park's western perimeter from north to south that was not on the original drawing. On the library building's southwest corner, a small (42 x 99 foot, with a 20 x 22 foot drive) parking lot interrupts Walk 2 (see Map 2). (2)

The main entrance to Library Park is at the northeast corner, as it was historically. From this point, there is a choice of three paths: Walk 1, leading south along the park's east boundary; Walk 3, the main path curving south to the front of the library; and Walk 4, heading west toward the Soldiers' Monument and then to the southwest around the northwest corner of the park, out onto 8th Avenue. The Soldiers' Monument is at the center of the north end of the site. The monument is aligned on axis south to the library building's main entrance. Walks 3, 4, 5, and 7 form boundaries around the field in which the monument is located. Within this space are several Norway

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Section 7 Page 2 Library Park  
Kenosha, Kenosha County, Wisconsin

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and sugar maples, a red oak, and an oak sapling. While the original plan shows three tree species located in a slightly different pattern, the present-day trees are all species that Simonds regularly planted. The 1899 plan also shows several groupings of shrubs within this area. Today, the only shrub plantations in the park at all are those immediately surrounding the library itself (also planned historically). Presumably there are no bushes for security reasons and for ease of maintenance.

At the northwest corner of the park, between Walk 4 and the street, is a large basswood tree where Simonds' plan had indicated a small group of trees. Continuing south along the western perimeter of the park on Walk 7, Walk 5 intersects, leading east toward the space in front of the library's main steps, as in the 1899 plan. At the same spot that Walk 5 joins the cement landing in front of the steps, the Walk 2 extension angles back toward Walk 7, pointing southwest, providing a path from the parking lot to the building. To the west of the library, between it and the walk, are several small trees, layers of shrubs around the library's base, and a large basswood tree, mixed together in a manner reminiscent of the early plan.

On the southwest corner of the building is a modern parking lot, screened from view in almost all directions by its proximity to the library on the north, and by a group of shrubs on its south and west sides, as well as from the northeast by hawthorn trees. Walk 2 leads into both the north and east edges of the lot. Farther south along Walk 7, the southern section of the park is a large, grassy field, with the only other walkways situated on the east side. There is a grove of mature Austrian pines, planted in a pattern similar to that on the early plan, as well as a basswood and an oak. Simonds' plan mentions a music stand near the west edge, about half-way between 61st Street and Walk 2; there is no structure there now. Three oaks and two paper birches are on the east side of this area.

Walk 2 and Walk 1 remain where Simonds platted them, although they are straighter and more angular than the original soft curves. Walk 1 retains its oblique entry at the southeast corner. An uneven row of trees lines the space between Walk 1 and 7th Avenue on the east side of the park, as in the 1899 drawing. A group of hawthorns surrounds the southeast corner of the building, and Walk 8, added since the first plan, angles northwest from Walk 1 to the cement plot in front of the main steps of the library.

Continuing north on Walk 1, Walk 6--another original path--enters from 7th Avenue, curving to the south to the front steps. Walk 1 continues north to the northeast corner of the park, ending where it meets Walk 3. A statue of

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Section 7 Page 3 Library Park  
Kenosha, Kenosha County, Wisconsin

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Abraham Lincoln, seated, is at the park entrance at the corner, between the two forks of Walk 3. Donated by Kenosha businessman Orla Calkins in 1909, the statue was created by sculptor Charles Henry Niehous. Initially located just east of the Soldiers' Monument, it was moved to its present location early on. (3) Taking the main path, #3, leads gently to the center of the park, to the small cement plaza in front of the north entrance to the library. There are more trees in this section (between Walks 3 and 1) now than on the first plan, including a maple, an ash, a basswood, and a honeysuckle, as well as a flag pole. (4) There are a few randomly placed, non-contributing benches throughout the park.

A broad terrace surrounds the library, following its cruciform footprint. There are several kinds of shrubs encompassing the terrace, including yew, burning bush, and alpine currant, as well as the group of hawthorn trees around the east and southeast edges of the terrace (noted above). The Neo-Classical Revival edifice, a contributing building, was listed in the National Register in 1974.

Expanses of open lawn, small clusters of trees, individual trees, and the minimal number of man-made objects combine to create a space that is both green and shady as well as open and airy. Original limestone curbing still exists around the west and south perimeter, where the park and street meet; some pieces are deteriorating and others missing completely. On the north and east the stone curbing has been replaced with cement.

The Library Park Historic District (listed in the NRHP in 1988) encloses the park on all four sides. Across from the park's east and southeast borders are several large nineteenth-century homes on large lots; on the northeast and west sides, there are a few apartment buildings; St. Matthews Episcopal Church and the Gothic-style Kenosha Youth Foundation are across the street to the north; and other public institutions such as a school, a church, a Masonic Temple, and the Jewish Community Center are on the west and southwest sides. The open spaces in the park and around the larger residences, the tall trees along either side of the streets, and the large scale of the public buildings and some of the homes combine to produce an elegant though informal landscape, one that without modern automobiles and modern overhead electric wires would look very similar to photographs taken in the early 1900s.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Library Park

Section 7 Page 4

Kenosha, Kenosha County, Wisconsin

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*Contributing Features*

Gilbert M. Simmons Memorial Library

One of Kenosha's prominent Neo-Classical Revival civic buildings, the Simmons Library was designed by nationally prominent architect, Daniel H. Burnham. Built for \$150,000, the library is a one-story building made of Bedford limestone, sitting on a raised foundation in the shape of a cross. There is a dome at its center, decorated with a running-swag design. The roof's corners of the pedimented gables are decorated with acanthus acroteria. Large, single-light windows with transoms are grouped in bands and decorated with pilasters. A group of steps lead to the main entrance of monumental bronze doors. A pedimented portico covers the recessed entrance and is supported by two Ionic columns. The rear of the building features an enclosed portico with details like those of the main entrance. The building was listed in the National Register in 1974, and as a contributing resource in the Library Park Historic District in 1988.

The construction of this public library building in Kenosha was the culmination of several years of work establishing a library society and raising funds for it. In 1899, Z.G. Simmons, a local industrialist, offered to build a library building and give it to the city. He stipulated that the facility be named for his late son and that the city levy a tax to support library operations. The city agreed, and the new library was dedicated on 30 May, 1900. (5)

Kenosha County Soldiers Monument

The Soldier's Monument was also donated by Zalmon Simmons, designed by Daniel Burnham's company, and dedicated at the same ceremony as the library. The statue is fifty-two feet high overall, (6) with a twelve-foot tall statue of Nike, the winged victory, standing atop a granite Corinthian column, facing north, out of the park. An Italian artist named Decco is credited by contemporary newspapers with sculpting the monument, and when it was erected, this was the largest piece of granite ever brought into Wisconsin. (7) An inscription at the bottom reads "In honor of the brave men of Kenosha County who victoriously defended the union on land and sea during the War of the Great Rebellion, 1861-1865."

During research for this nomination, a drawing of "Soldiers' Monument for Kenosha" was found in the cataloged but not accessioned collections of the Art Institute of Chicago. The original was drawn by Peter J. Weber, who had worked briefly for Daniel Burnham in the 1890s. His son Bertram donated the tattered blueprint, measuring 128 x 72 cm., in 1986. (8)

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Kenosha, Kenosha County, Wisconsin

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**Notes to Section 7:**

- (1) Copy of plan on file with Library Park Planning Committee.
- (2) Although a copy of the plan survives, a key denoting plant species used does not. This makes it impossible to know exactly what was planned, but two other Simonds designs for the same period, the Rockwell King home grounds design from 1899 and the Cruickshank estate plan from 1900, have 25 species in common, giving an accurate idea of the plants Simonds typically used then. In addition, six of the major species now in the park (out of 20 or so now growing there) match items on one or both of those planting lists; at least three others are found throughout Simonds' career on other plans; and the stand of Austrian pines at the southwest corner of the park has a pattern similar to that of the original plan.
- (3) *Bulletin of the Kenosha County Historical Society*, Ser. 6, No. 6 (1950?).
- (4) Information from city forester Dirk Nelson during a walk-through of Library Park, July, 1998.
- (5) Description of the library from the National Register of Historic Places Nomination for the Library Park Historic District.
- (6) Measurement courtesy of Mike Maki, Kenosha Planning Department.
- (7) *Kenosha Evening News*, 30 May 1900.
- (8) Annemarie Van Roessel, Department of Architecture, Art Institute of Chicago, located this item in response to a request from the researcher.

Library Park  
Name of Property

Kenosha County, Wisconsin  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

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

Areas of Significance  
(Enter categories from  
instructions)

A Property is associated with events  
that have made a significant  
contribution to the broad patterns of  
our history.

Landscape Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

B Property is associated with the lives  
of persons significant in our past.

Period of Significance

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.

1899-1900  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

D Property has yielded, or is likely to  
yield, information important in  
prehistory or history.

Significant Dates

1899  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

Significant Person  
(Complete if Criterion B is  
marked above)

A owned by a religious institution or  
used for religious purposes.

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

B removed from its original location.

Cultural Affiliation

C a birthplace or grave.

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or  
structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age achieved  
significance within the past 50 years.

Architect/Builder

Simonds, Ossian Cole  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

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



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Section 8 Page 1 Library Park  
Kenosha, Kenosha County, Wisconsin

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Library Park has been a public green since the first Euro-Americans settled in the area around 1835. Over time, it has been a pasture, improved as a park, and finally, in 1899-1900, designed as a whole landscape by nationally prominent landscape architect O.C. Simonds, to surround the new library built at the park's center. Simonds' design is essentially intact today, with the paths in their original configurations and the combination of lawns and trees very similar to the original plans. A contributing feature in the Library Park Historic District, the park is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in its own right for its significance under Criterion C, in the "Landscape Architecture" category.

***HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF LIBRARY PARK***

The Kenosha area had been settled for about three years when David Crosit, Charles H. Durkee, George Kimball, and several other men platted the Village of Southport on 30 October 1838 (the name was changed to Kenosha in 1850). This plat designated a "Public Common" at Town Line Road (now 60th Street) and Kenosha Road (now 8th Avenue), making this rectangle of land a park from the town's earliest days, with land donated by Durkee and Kimball. Part of an area known as the "oak glades," Kimball, Crosit, and Durkee sought to protect its old oaks from being cut down. (1) Durkee built his home, a log cabin made of black walnut, on the south edge of the common and other prominent citizens chose to build their homes around the commons' perimeter, with the Lucien Scribner house erected on the east side in 1843, the Volney French house built on the west side in 1846, and several others around the commons over the next few decades. (2) Local women formed a Park Society in order to gain community support for improving this public space into a more refined city park, and in the spring of 1849 issued an announcement:

NOTICE: The ladies of the Park Society would respectfully request the gentlemen of Southport to devote Tuesday, April 4th, commencing at 8:00 o'clock A.M. in improving the appearance of the Commons by removing stumps, decayed limbs, etc. as to them seems advisable. It is hoped the gentlemen will come prepared with suitable utensils to aid them and remove decayed limbs, stumps, grubs, etc. (3)

The local newspaper opposed this plan, because its editors saw this use as wasteful, and encouraged the Kenoshans to use the commons as an animal pasture instead. The park supporters won, and put a white board fence up around it, with unpaved city streets installed around the park's perimeter. The Park Society created a lagoon on which to ice-skate in the winter and to add to interest and beauty to Central (or City) Park year round. Another park site

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**National Register of Historic Places  
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Section 8 Page 2 Library Park  
Kenosha, Kenosha County, Wisconsin

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was given to the city in 1856 at 7th Avenue and 45th Street, and by the time the Civil War started, Kenoshans had grown so attached to their parks that they referred to their town as "Park City." The first volunteer company from Kenosha which mustered in on 25 April 1861 was named the "Park City Grays."

Over the next several years, people lost interest in creating a true city park out of the commons and the newspaper got its wish for an in-town pasture. In 1884, neighbors around the park complained about the noise the bullfrogs made in the summer, as well as the more serious problem with mosquitoes, and the city filled in the pond.(4) But there was resurgent concern with making City Park a pleasant place for gathering, and a group of citizens gave an elaborate dance that same year to raise money to for its maintenance. The site received further attention in 1895, when local music lovers built a bandstand at northeast corner and people used the park as a short-cut into town, by taking "a well-marked diagonal path [that] traversed the park from the southeast to the northwest corners." (5)

Once again, Kenoshans became attached to the trees here, with some protesting the cutting of even the dead oaks, and one local paper suggesting that vines be planted to cover them. A few seats were added, some potted flowers were put on tree stumps, and in-ground flower beds planted in 1895, giving it a more city park-like appearance. Regulations came along with the improvements: bicycling and ball playing were prohibited, with fines imposed on those who disregarded the rules. Unpopular at first, by 1896 many people endorsed these new restrictions because the park was such a pleasant place to visit without the noise and activity of games. The local newspaper reported on 6 August 1896 that "One of the prettiest features of Kenosha today and one greatly enjoyed by the public is Central Park. Never in the history of this city have the people taken so much comfort from Kenosha's resting spot." (6)

At the same time that Kenosha's Central Park was coming back to life, some citizens started promoting the idea of a public library. A committee formed to work on practical details and held its first meeting in November 1895 to plan a public library. Wasting no time, by March 1896 the new library opened in a room rented above a hardware store.(7) By 1898, the book collection had outgrown this space, and in January 1899, well-to-do Kenosha businessman Zalmon G. Simmons offered to erect a library building in "the Public Square of Central Park and to place the park in condition to make a beautiful setting for the building . . ." (8) His proposal included the purchase of new books and furniture for the inside, and for the exterior, Simmons pledged:

I will continue and complete the curbing around the park. I will make

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Section 8 Page 3 Library Park  
Kenosha, Kenosha County, Wisconsin

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of cement or concrete all the walks that will be required in the park, will do all necessary grading; will remove and replace all the dead trees and add thereto all the trees and shrubbery that may be needed to make the park a fit setting for the building so that there will be true harmony throughout . . .(9)

Simmons hired architect Daniel H. Burnham, famous for his role as Director of Works for Chicago's World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, to design the library building. When the plaster-of-paris model of the Classical Revival edifice arrived at Simmons' office on 8 March 1899, the local paper called it the "Finest Building in the State," mentioning that it was scheduled to be finished by 1 September 1899. Burnham placed the Bedford limestone building in the center of the park, its entrance facing north. Built in the shape of a cross, a rotunda topped with dome was at the center of the axes of the building. The building was 132 feet long, seventy-two feet wide, and sixty-two feet high, built on a terrace about five feet high of cut stone 168 feet long and 128 feet wide, following the form of the building. (10)

Burnham also had definite intentions for the grounds of Central Park around the library:

The scheme of the architect also plans for such improvement of the park as will make it a fit place for the placing of such a building. The curb around the park is to be completed and the entire park laid out with broad walks leading from the library in every direction. The architect says that such a classic building demands a formal design for the grounds about it. The pavements are to be made of pebbles imbedded in cement and all will lead to the main entrance. Another feature of the park decoration will be the erection of a band stand in harmony with the main features of the library building. This smaller building will be placed about three hundred feet from the main building and the design will be made by Mr. Burnham. (11)

The appearance of the site changed greatly when work began on the new Neo-Classical library on 4 May of that year, constructed in the center of the park according to Burnham's specifications. (12) Despite these major alterations, the use of the park as a pleasure ground and social gathering place did not change. Burnham also became involved with the design of Simmons' war memorial. Before his donation of a library, Simmons had offered to pay one-third of the cost of erecting a monument to honor the 1,367 Kenosha County men who had fought in the Civil War. Initially accepted by the City Council, it

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Section 8 Page 4 Library Park  
Kenosha, Kenosha County, Wisconsin

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revoked its decision to accept the proposal the next day, stating that the City could not afford to pay for any of the marker. In early 1899, Simmons proposed an eighty-foot tall stone monument on Market Street, this time apparently willing to pay the entire cost. Announced in the 2 March 1899 edition of the *Kenosha Telegraph Courier*, the plan that Simmons favored was for an Egyptian obelisk fifty-five feet high made of one piece of Vermont granite weighing over ninety tons, the steps and base of which would add the other twenty-five feet.(13) A sketch of the proposed monument was printed in the paper the following week, a few pages after the article about the arrival of the building model.

Over the next few months, though, not only did the intended site change from Market Street to the north end of Central Park, but the monument's form metamorphosed from a simple obelisk to a Corinthian column topped by a twelve-foot statute of Nike, the winged victory. According to contemporary sources, Burnham designed the monument, and an Italian sculptor named Decco executed it. Rising about fifty-two feet on its base, the marker was aligned directly north of the library's entrance.(14) Given Burnham's penchant for large-scale formality, it seems safe to assume that he intended a grand walk on a straight axis from the sculpture to the building.

However, Simmons did not follow Burnham's landscape suggestions and instead hired Chicago designer O.C. Simonds to draw up a plan for the park. Simonds had been the superintendent for nearly twenty years of Graceland Cemetery in Chicago, one of the foremost rural cemeteries in America. He was completely committed to an informal, naturalistic style of landscape because he believed in its salutary effects on people.(15)

Thus, Simonds' approach to the park was the antithesis of Burnham's. Where Burnham specified broad and formal walks aligned with the building's axes, and presumably leading directly to the monument on the north, Simonds drew an oblique approach for the main entrance at the northeast corner of the park, with walks gently curving to the doors of the library. He planned no formal flower beds or allees of trees. Instead, there were rolling lawns and clusters of trees and shrubs. Around the border of the park, he placed a wall of bushes to partly screen out the sights of the city and enhance the feeling of the pastoral landscape. Instead of a clear view of the marker from the steps of the library, and vice versa, Simonds carefully placed a few trees to partly obscure these objects from view, thereby creating a more inviting and provocative scene.(16) Part of Simonds' approach to design was to preserve existing plants wherever possible, and he would certainly have done so with any ancient oaks here, curving footpaths around them when necessary.(17)

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Comparing the circulation pattern of the park of 1998 to the landscape plan of 1899 it seems certain that most of Simonds plan was implemented here. How and why Simmons chose such a radically different landscape for his library than Burnham requested remains a mystery.

The city was still in financial difficulties in September of 1899, and Simmons, as concerned as ever about the setting for the library, told the City Council he would "advance all the funds needed" to pave the streets around Central Park, allowing the city to reimburse him when it was able. (18) On 11 October, Mrs. Simmons died, but her husband did not lose interest in the park project. (19) The base for the Soldiers' Monument "was laid with Appropriate Ceremonies" on November 2 and a box with memorabilia was placed in it by Miss Elizabeth Simmons (presumably Zalmon Simmons' granddaughter). (20) Both the library and monument were dedicated at a large ceremony on Memorial Day, 30 May 1900. The re-designed grounds became the responsibility of Kenosha's first park employee later that year.

**AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE: LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE**

Library Park is significant because it is one of the few remaining examples of the American Romantic style of landscape as practiced by internationally recognized landscape architect Ossian Cole Simonds (1855-1931). As defined by *National Register Bulletin 18*, the American Romantic style was characterized by its emphasis on natural scenery, native plant materials, lack of formal design, and a curvilinear circulation system. (21)

*Design Style*

Throughout his fifty-three year career, Simonds was devoted to an informal, naturalistic style of landscape because he believed in its uplifting and healthful effects on people. (22) He believed that a landscape ought to present a "consistent picture," one created by the various shapes and colors provided by the plants, the sky, and where possible, the water. He allowed the topography of a site to guide the placement of walks and roads, rather than imposing a pre-determined scheme. Whenever possible, he made use of existing plants within his plan and transplanted trees, shrubs, vines, and perennials from surrounding woods and fields. Simonds also used a few exotic species for their colorful spring blossoms or their fragrant flowers, such as lilacs, mock orange, and honeysuckle. In general, he was carrying on the landscape traditions of Frederick Law Olmsted and Andrew Jackson Downing, as well as the practices of their English predecessors, Lancelot "Capability" Brown and Edward Kemp.

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As early as 1624 writer Henry Wotton and scientist Francis Bacon had written essays on the inspiring and stimulating aspects of irregular gardens, in contrast with the effects of formal, geometric gardens. Brown refined this approach in the following century, relying on

a few quite obvious elements. The park is bounded by an encircling belt of woodland, . . . interrupted to admit any distant prospect or object of pictorial interest. The edge of the belt is irregular, receding or projecting according to the contours, and softened by outlying clumps or individual trees . . .(23)

A few decades later, Kemp adapted these principles to a public pleasure ground at Birkenhead Park in Liverpool. Both Downing and Olmsted found inspiration when they visited Birkenhead, and they applied similar design precepts to projects at home. Olmsted's plan for Central Park in New York, designed with his partner Calvert Vaux, became the standard for public parks throughout the nation. This naturalistic, English landscape park mode made a refreshing contrast to congested city streets and the grimy and smoky factories of the late nineteenth-century. Thus, implementing Simonds' design for Library Park provided a breath of fresh air next to downtown Kenosha.

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*Design Elements of Library Park*

Library Park is situated on a fairly level expanse of ground. Where Simonds would have planned the paths around the variations in grade at a more uneven site, here he relied on creating changes in scene to locate the walks. To provide a pleasant place to stroll, and a convenient and attractive means of getting from any one side of the park to the library in the center or to another side of the park, Simonds planned a gently curving system of walks throughout the site. Major plantings were located to produce variations in sun and shade for the visitor's stroll, and to enhance visual interest around the edifice and the monument. By planting trees and shrubs in irregular groupings, Simonds further sought to make a series of living paintings throughout the park, with views of meadows, bordered by naturally appearing forest and shrub groups. Views into and out of the park were framed by vegetation. Views out were thus minimized to promote the sense of nature and seclusion, and views in minimized to create a sense of invitation and intrigue.

The planting key for Library Park has been lost, but two other keys from Simonds design at the turn-of-the-century clients provide evidence of his preferred material. The Rockwell King home grounds design from 1899 and the John J. Cruickshank home grounds design from 1900 share twenty-five species. At least six of the species now growing in the park match items on one or both planting keys: berberis spp. (barberry), ribes spp. (currants), euonymus alatus (burning bush), acer platanoides (Norway maple), gleditsia triacanthos (honey locust), and tilia spp. (linden); crataegus spp. (hawthorne), of which there are several, occurs in many of Simonds' plans throughout the years.

A comparison of the general location and grouping of plants in the 1899 plan (Map 1) with a recent sketch map of the park now (Map 2) shows most of the major plantings to be very similar to the original intention. The library building is in its original position, as is the Soldiers' Monument, and the later addition Lincoln statue moved from the east side of the larger monument (marked with an "X" on Map 2) to the park entrance at the northeast corner. The parking lot, a much later change, is at the building's southwest corner, where Simonds had initially pencilled in a circular carriage drive. Library Park is significant because the overall effect of the park remains the same as in Simonds' as illustrated in early photographs.

*Landscape Architect and Architecture*

Library Park is significant because it is one of the only three known projects

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on which Simonds worked with the internationally important architect Daniel H. Burnham. The first venture was the Glen View Club in Golf, Illinois in 1897, for which Burnham reportedly found the club's beautiful location and then convinced Simonds to design the grounds. (24) They worked at the second site, Beloit College in Beloit, Wisconsin, more than a decade apart--Burnham and partner John Wellborn Root designed the brick Romanesque style hall in the late 1880s and Simonds planned the campus around 1900 while he was designing a park for that city. (25)

Ossian Cole Simonds (1855-1931)

When Zalmon Simmons hired him to draw up a plan for the park, Simonds had already gained a national reputation for his naturalistic landscape design. He had been employed at Graceland Cemetery in Chicago for nearly twenty years, and as its superintendent had full responsibility for its evolving landscape. It was at Graceland that Simonds first learned this naturalistic, romantic method of landscaping, after graduating from the University of Michigan as a civil engineer in 1878. An apprentice to William Le Baron Jenney for about a year, Simonds dealt with drainage and expansion projects first; after leaving Jenney, he took on the gradual establishment of a cemetery landscape that would comfort and console the bereaved. Using mostly native plants from nearby woods and fields, Simonds created inviting scenes and walkways. Roads curved gently to provide ever-changing vistas, and to shorten the distance between sections. When he died in 1931, *American Landscape Architecture* prefaced its posthumous publication of Simonds' article, "Graceland at Chicago," by saying, "Graceland Cemetery is regarded by many as the late Mr. Simonds' greatest contribution to the art of landscape architecture." (26) Before hired by Simmons, Simonds had planned the landscape and layout for Fort Sheridan in Highwood, Illinois in 1885 and 1886, and worked on its drainage and sewer system. (27) In 1894, he had planned the grounds for the Chicago Golf Club in Wheaton, Illinois, the first known eighteen-hole golf course in the Midwest, if not the United States, and had been working with the Quincy, Illinois park system since 1895. (28)

Library Park was one of Simonds' earliest, if not the first, design projects in Wisconsin. Within the next few years after his Library Park commission, Simonds would design Washington Park in Springfield, Illinois (listed in the NRHP in 1994) and create parks and drives in conjunction with the Madison Parks and Pleasure Drive Association (MPPDA) in Madison, Wisconsin. The MPPDA was enormously successful, both in its beautifully scenic grounds and in its administration and fund-raising, and for several years its annual report was eagerly sought by other park organizations and landscape designers throughout



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the country. Other subsequent projects in Wisconsin included several subdivisions and perhaps the Black Hawk Country Club in Madison, part of the road to Green Lake and some work for the Victor Lawson estate there, as well as a city park and college grounds in Beloit. Simonds designed estates, cemeteries, and college campuses in Iowa, Illinois, and Michigan, and private grounds in more than thirty states--more than a thousand plans in his own estimation. He planned a large extension for Chicago's Lincoln Park, an early version of the University of Chicago campus, and worked on an English cottage plan for the Illinois Industrial School for Girls. In his last decade, Simonds conceived the grounds and collection plans for the new Morton Arboretum, in Lisle, Illinois. Shortly thereafter, he was commissioned to design a final resting place for Alexander Graham Bell at the family retreat in Nova Scotia.

Simonds was well-known for his many published pieces explaining his informal design style and his frequent use of native plants. His articles appeared in the *Michigan Horticulturist*, *Garden and Forest*, *The House Beautiful*, and *Park and Cemetery*, among other journals. He summed up his design philosophy and methods in his book, *Landscape Gardening*, published by Macmillan in 1920, and reprinted in 1939. Active in many professional organizations, Simonds was a founding member of Association of American Cemetery Superintendents in 1887, The Outdoor Art and Park Association in 1897, and the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1899, for which he served as president, 1913-1914. He was an active member of the Western Society of Engineers and the Horticultural Societies of Illinois and Michigan. (29) Graceland Cemetery received the Paris Exposition Silver Medal of 1900 for Simonds' work in creating "the best sets of twelve views in cemeteries of any country." (30) And the Architectural League of New York gave him its gold medal for landscape design in 1925. (31)

Daniel Hudson Burnham (1846-1912)

Burnham also began his career by working for William Le Baron Jenney for a short time. A few years later, Burnham formed a partnership with architect John Wellborn Root, with whom he worked until Root's early death in 1891. At this same time, Burnham became Director of Works for the World's Columbian Exposition, working closely with eastern architects McKim, Mead, and White. Through this experience, he developed a strong appreciation for Neo-Classical Revival and Beaux Arts buildings, sited on formal axial walks or drives, and it was this style that promoted for the rest of his career. The Gilbert M. Simmons Memorial Library in Kenosha is a fine small-scale example of his work. Burnham's list of architectural achievements fill pages, and he was, even during his lifetime, considered one of the outstanding architects in American

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history. (32) He is buried at Graceland Cemetery, on a small wooded island with a boulder as a monument.

*Historic Integrity*

Library Park's design shows remarkable historic integrity and the overall effect is very similar to its historic appearance. The walkways are in the same locations as shown in the 1899 plan, with the exception of an additional walk around the Lincoln statue and a public sidewalk along the southwestern edge. While trees and shrubs have been replaced over the years, most of them are the same species that Simonds regularly planted. These include sugar and Norway maples, yews, currants, barberry, euonymous, native oaks, Austrian pines, hawthornes, and crabapples. Diseased or dead plants have been removed and/or replaced as required, but the overall look of the park today is scarcely distinguishable from photographs of ninety years ago. The biggest change has been the addition of a small parking lot on the building's southwest corner. While this alters the appearance of the park when viewed from the immediate west or south, the lot is partially hidden with shrubs and crabapple trees, and is not visible from any other direction.

Although Simonds was one of the foremost park designers in America in his day, as well as a prolific and influential landscape designer throughout the Midwest for several decades, there are very few remaining examples of his work. Library Park is thus a relatively rare sample that retains its design integrity, has been well-maintained, and has not had its planting scheme severely altered. Library Park has also continuously served the function of public open space for more than 160 years, and is still used for passive recreation.

The library was listed in the National Register in 1974; the Soldiers' Monument and Lincoln were listed as contributing elements in the Library Park Historic District. (33) The period of significance for this nomination is based on the dates of Simonds' design, 1899, to the dedication of the library and Soldiers' Monument in 1900.

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**Notes to Section 8:**

- (1) City Council Minutes, 1899.
- (2) Frank H. Lyman, *The City of Kenosha and Kenosha County, Wisconsin*, Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1916, p. 28.
- (3) *Bulletin of the Kenosha County Historical Society*, Ser. 6, No. 6 (1950?)
- (4) *Ibid.*
- (5) Undated newspaper clipping in pamphlet file at the Kenosha Public Library showing a photo of Central Park in 1895.
- (6) *Bulletin of the Kenosha County Historical Society*.
- (7) Cova M. Franz, "Gilbert M. Simmons Library: A History 1895-1931," unpublished manuscript on file in the Kenosha Public Library, Kenosha, Wisconsin.
- (8) Proposition from Zalmon G. Simmons to President and Common Council of the City of Kenosha, January 1899; City Council minutes, January, 1899.
- (9) *Ibid.*
- (10) *Kenosha Telegraph Courier*, 9 March 1899, p. 2.
- (11) *Ibid.*
- (12) *Kenosha Evening News*, 3 May 1899, p. 1.
- (13) "Plan for Monument; W. H. Morse Co. Of Barre, VT Submit a Design," *Kenosha Telegraph Courier*, 2 March 1899, p. 2.
- (14) Recent transept measurement of monument's height courtesy of Mike Maki, City of Kenosha Planning Department.
- (15) Simmonds' writings and designs over the course of his career reiterate this philosophy, and is summed up in *Landscape Gardening*, his book published in 1920 by MacMillan Publishing Company in New York.
- (16) Plan for Library Grounds, 1899, O. C. Simonds.
- (17) Simonds, *Landscape Gardening*.
- (18) *Kenosha Telegraph Courier*, 7 September 1899.
- (19) *Kenosha Telegraph Courier*, 12 October 1899.
- (20) *Kenosha Telegraph Courier*, 2 November 1899, p. 1.
- (21) J. Timothy Keller, and Genevieve P. Keller, "How to Evaluate and Nominate Designed Historic Landscapes," National Park Service, 1994, p. 6.

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(22) For example, Simonds essay in the *Journal of the Western Society of Engineers*, June, 1900.

(23) Christopher Hussey, introduction to Dorothy Stroud, *Capability Brown*, London: Country Life Ltd., 1956, p. 17.

(24) Barbara Geiger, "Nature as the Great Teacher: The Life and Work of Landscape Designer O. C. Simonds," unpublished master's thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1997, p. 65. The Glen View Club also maintains good historic landscape integrity.

(25) Richard P. Hartung, Michael Gorecki, and David Preece, "Intensive Survey Report, Historic Resources of the City of Beloit, Wisconsin," Department of Community Development, City of Beloit, 1984.

(26) Ossian Cole Simonds, "Graceland at Chicago," *American Landscape Architecture*, January, 1931; Walter L. Creese, *The Crowning of the American Landscape: Eight Great Spaces and Their Buildings*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985.

(27) Suzanne Carter Meldman, "Fort Sheridan Historic Landscape: Ossian Cole Simonds," Report submitted to the Department of the Army Corps of Engineers, Champaign, IL, February, 1995.

(28) Geiger, pp. 64-67.

(29) *Ibid.*, pp. 77-79.

(30) *Ibid.*, p. 81.

(31) *Ibid.*, p. 150.

(32) National Register of Historic Places Nomination for the Library Park Historic District, 1988, Section 8, p. 7.

(33) *Ibid.*

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National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Library Park Historic District, Kenosha, Wisconsin. On file in the Historic Preservation Division of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

Neuenschwander, John A., ed. *Kenosha County in the Twentieth Century: A Topical History*. Kenosha: Kenosha County Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

Library Park  
Name of Property

Kenosha County, Wisconsin  
County and State

Previous Documentation on File (NPS):  
data:

Primary location of additional

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

- State Historic Preserv. Office
  - Other State Agency
  - Federal Agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 5.5 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

|   |                        |                      |   |                            |                      |
|---|------------------------|----------------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | <u>1/6 4/3/2/6/6/0</u> | <u>4/7/1/4/4/4/0</u> | 3 | <u>1/6 4/3/2/7/0/0</u>     | <u>4/7/1/4/2/3/0</u> |
|   | Zone Easting           | Northing             |   | Zone Easting               | Northing             |
| 2 | <u>1/6 4/3/2/7/6/0</u> | <u>4/7/1/4/4/7/0</u> | 4 | <u>1/6 4/3/2/7/8/0</u>     | <u>4/7/1/4/2/5/0</u> |
|   | Zone Easting           | Northing             |   | Zone Easting               | Northing             |
|   |                        |                      |   | ___ see continuation sheet |                      |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Barbara Geiger, Landscape Historian  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number 1414 Pebblecreek Drive telephone 847-998-9311  
city or town Glenview state IL zip code 60025

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

- Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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***LIBRARY PARK, KENOSHA, KENOSHA COUNTY, WISCONSIN***

Photos by Barbara Geiger, September, 1998. Negatives on file in the Historic Preservation Division of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

Views:

- 1 of 6: North side of library, view from the north.
- 2 of 6: North side of park, view from the northeast.
- 3 of 6: North side of park, view from the south.
- 4 of 6: South side of park, view from the northwest.
- 5 of 6: South side of park, view from the northwest.
- 6 of 6: East side of library, view from the northeast.



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***VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION***

Beginning at the intersection of the south curb line of 59th Place and the west curb line of 7th Ave., then south along the west curb line of 7th Ave. To the north curb line of 61st St., then west along the north curb line of 61st St. to the east curb line of 8th Ave., then north along the east curb line of 8th Ave. to the south curb line of 59th Place, then east along the south curb line of 59th Place, to the point of beginning.

***BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION***

These boundaries have been the historic boundaries of Library Park for its entire history.

Library Park  
Name of Property

Kenosha County, Wisconsin  
County and State

**Property Owner** \_\_\_\_\_

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Kenosha, Attn: Mike Maki  
street & number 625 52nd St. telephone (414) 653-4028  
city or town Kenosha state WI zip code 53140

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

59th

ABRAHAM LIJ

8th

7th

WINGED VICTORY MONUMENT

FLAG

WALK 5

WALK 6

WALK 2ext

WALK 8

SIMMONS LIBRARY

WALK 2contd

PARKING LOT

WALK 1

AVE.

WALK 2

WALK 7

AVE.

61st

8th

EXISTING CURB

MAP 2

LIBRARY PARK  
KENOSHA, KENOSHA COUNTY  
WISCONSIN

Boundary  
not to scale

